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Javier Arenas Gives
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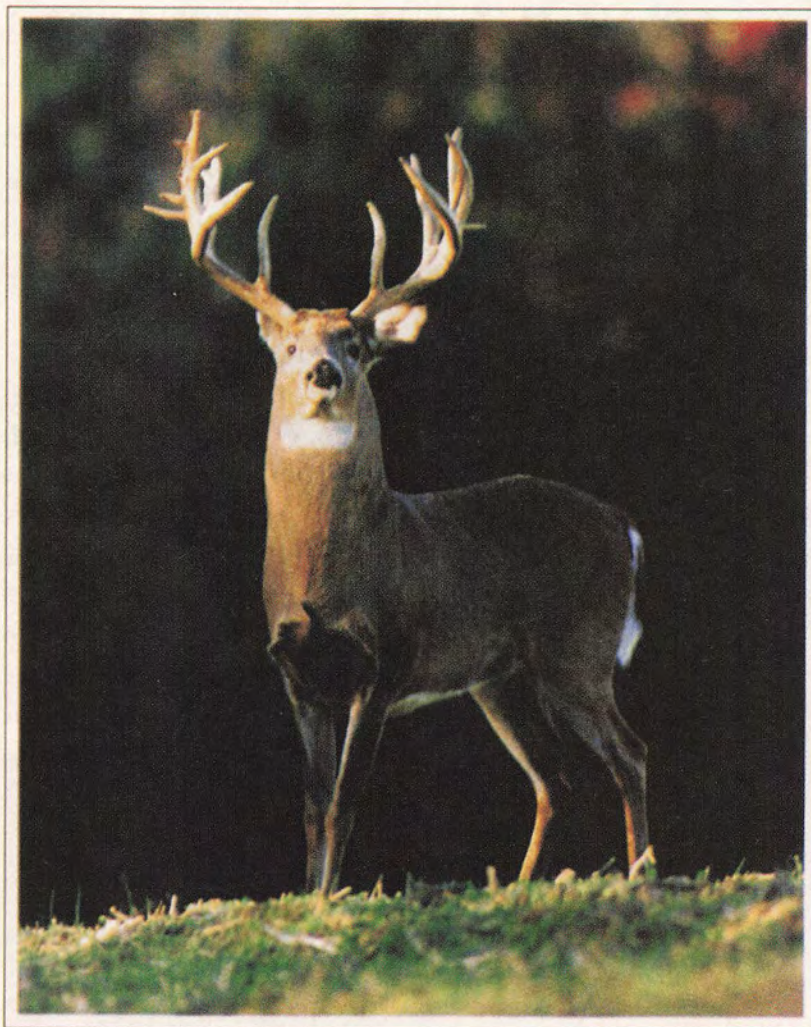
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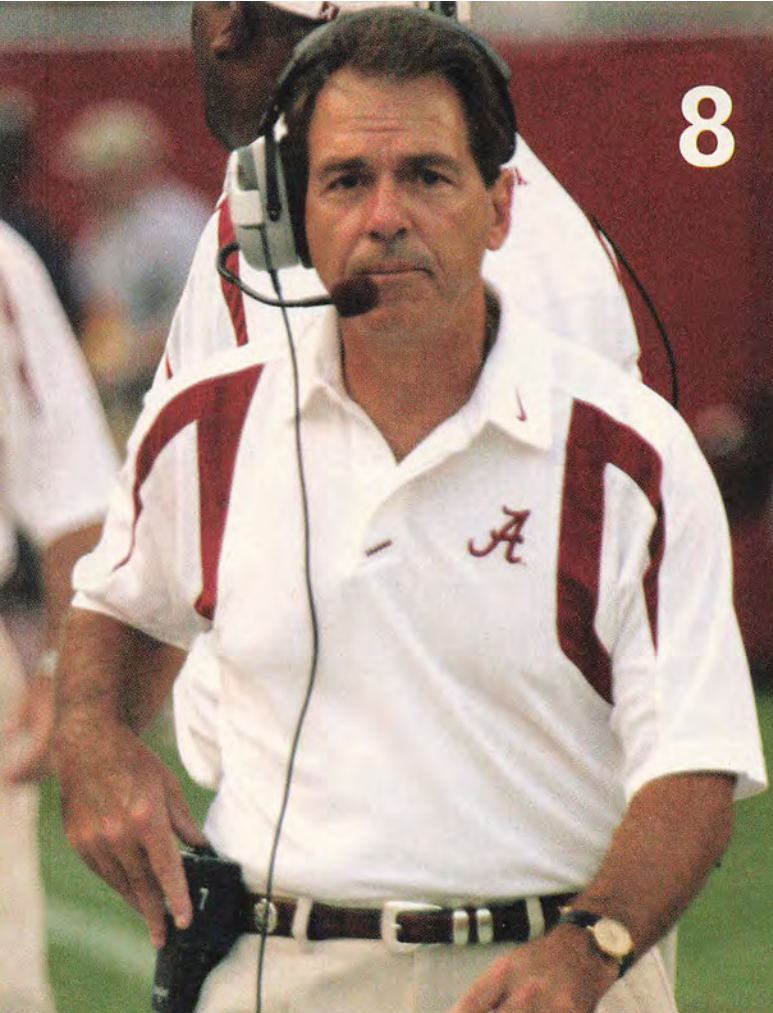
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Cover photo of Javier Arenas by Kent Gidley



here's to all the people
who would rather pay the fare
than pay the price.



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Dear Fellow Crimson Tide Fans,

I have a friend, an excellent golfer, who puts his clubs away the first day the temperature fails to reach 60. "I'll be back in a few months," he announced as the calendar rolled over into 2008.

Major college football doesn't have that luxury. In truth, for most college athletes in every sport there is not much down time. That doesn't mean there are no off days. It means that an athlete can't be too long away from the things that make him (or her) better able to perform.

In football, it's easy to segment the year into seasons.

Beginning in January when players return to classes for the spring semester, they also return to the weight room. The winter is an important time for strength and conditioning. That leads to spring football practice. Anyone who thinks there isn't much interest in spring football wasn't among the 92,000 who showed up for Alabama's 2007 A-Day Game.

Players get some off time after spring practice, but the weight room and conditioning continue to be important.

With the start of what once was known as summer vacation, virtually every player will be on campus. Players are involved in strength and conditioning, but also take part in game-specific drills. Coaches can't participate, so it's up to the players to organize the work. Offensive skill position players go against defensive backs and linebackers. Those workouts (pass skels) have been going on for years. More recently, linemen have gotten into specialized drills for shorts and tee shirt weather.

Football players report in August for pre-season camp. A couple of weeks before the opening game the team goes into game mode, preparing for the dozen or so contests of the regular season.

With reasonable success comes bowl season, preparation that begins somewhat like fall camp and evolves into a game week.

In Alabama, football discussion is like football preparation. It is also year-round.

Sincerely,
Kirk McNair
Editor

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Editor
Kirk McNair

Recruiting Reporter
Andrew Bone

Feature Reporters
Erik Stinnett, Creg Stephenson,
Cary L. Clark, Peter Edmund,
Andrew Varble II, Walter Bostock,
Arnold P. Steadham, Scott Latta,
Gentry Estes, Becky Hopf, Lindsey Laurent

Photos
Kent Gidley
Barry Fikes
Benjamin Cohen
Butch Dill
Stuart McNair
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Enter Year II

Reasons Tide will be improved in 2008

Alabama Football Coach Nick Saban gave it some time, officially at least. The Crimson Tide's 30-24 Independence Bowl victory over Colorado was barely over before Saban and his staff were back at work, a couple of days "vacation" separating the bowl game from 2008 preparation.

There was a thorough review of the up-and-down 2007 season in which Bama forged a 7-6 record—after having opened the year with a 6-2 mark. There was continuation of the very successful recruiting campaign. And there was preparation for the off-season program and spring practice.

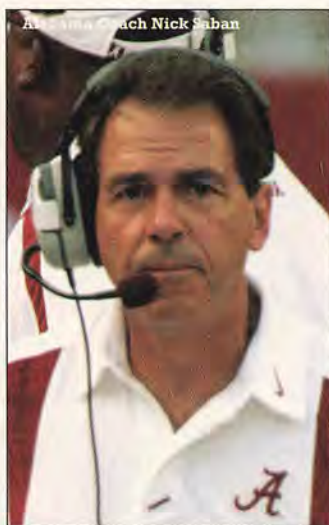
The Crimson Tide has some assets as it looks to its second season under Saban. As the record shows, there are also areas in which much improvement must be made. As part of college football, replacements must be found for departed players.

Even before the bowl game, Saban said he had been giving thought to the prospects for 2008.

Anyone watching other bowl games, specifically the BCS Championship Game in which LSU (with 17 Saban signees in starting roles) defeated Ohio State, knows that winning isn't done with smoke and mirrors. The teams that were most impressive were the teams with the best players.

Saban's first Bama team improved by one game over the final Crimson Tide team of Mike Shula. That was not far off reasonable expectations. The upset loss at the hands of Louisiana-Monroe was particularly galling in 2007, but there were several other "could have" situations last season that could have made it a very good season. Alabama gave away far too much in losses to Florida State, LSU and Mississippi State. The Tide played Georgia to overtime and Auburn close, but those squads—like LSU—had far more personnel assets than Bama.

Alabama may benefit from new players in 2008. The 2007 group of signees provided some help, though maybe not as much as had been hoped. The business of college football involves some rebuilding almost every year, but the



Stuart McNair Photo

foundation of most teams is returning players, and particularly returning starters.

The flip side of that is returning a starter who didn't get the job done one year and doesn't get it done again the next season.

Alabama has some returning key players. Bama also has some returning starters where performance needs to improve. And the Crimson Tide will have to find new starters at positions where players have been lost.

Alabama also needs to find an identity. Saban has made it clear that he wants Bama to be a tough team, "relentless." To say that the Crimson Tide has not achieved that identity is an understatement. Want to know where a team is tough? In the Red Zone. On offense, Alabama ranked 10th in the Southeastern Conference. On defense, dead last.

Alabama doesn't have good schedule luck next year. Bama's SEC road games are all tough—at Arkansas, Georgia, Tennessee and LSU. Additionally, the Tide will play Clemson in Atlanta.

Last season the expectation was that the offense would have to carry the defense. That turned out to be not the case as the defense was better than expected, the offense less efficient. Special teams play was also better than expected. With Ron Middleton departed for Duke there will be a new man in charge of the overall kicking game in 2008.

When Saban and his staff get spring practice started, everyone will be far, far ahead of where the team was at the same time a year ago. The adage that a football team makes its greatest progress between its first and second game is more true if season is substituted for game.

Here is a look at what might be expected as the Crimson Tide begins the process of preparing for the 2008 season.

OFFENSE

Alabama was average on offense in 2007. That is, statistically average. Of the 119 teams in Division I, Alabama finished 59th in rushing offense (149.2 yards per game), 60th in passing offense (224.5 yards per game), and 64th in scoring offense (27.1 points per game).

One thing that almost all agree on is that the most important position on the football field is quarterback. And that's where agreement ends, in many cases.

For as long as fans have been making judgments about football teams, it is likely that a sizeable number of them have questioned whether the right man was playing quarterback. At the conclusion of Alabama's 1962-spring practice, almost

no one who attended the A-Day Game would have suggested that Jack Hurlbut could be beaten out at quarterback. He was obviously superior to the untested sophomore, Joe Namath.

Usually, though, it is the unseen quarterback deemed best. Alabama is not the only place where the most popular player on the team is the back-up quarterback. And throughout the past season as the Tide struggled, fans were sure that Bama would be better off if redshirt freshman Greg McElroy would replace two-year starter John Parker Wilson at quarterback. Better still: true freshman Nick Fanuzzi. Lately it has been suggested that Star Jackson, who is expected to enter The University in August, would be best to run the offense.

The media doesn't get to watch practice, and even if practice were open the prudent policy would be to trust veteran coaches to determine the best player at quarterback and every other position. We have heard from a few men whose football judgment we trust who have been permitted to see practice, and reports from them are that Wilson is the right man to be playing quarterback.

Wilson had some bad moments last season. His pass that was intercepted at the goalline just before halftime against Mississippi State goes down as one of the worst mistakes imaginable. On the other hand, Wilson has set a lot of positive records for Alabama, and he's on track to set a lot more. When you break records at Bama, you have broken marks set by some of the best in college football history.

No one had a harder job last fall than Wilson. As if the task of quarterback is not difficult enough, Wilson had to "unlearn" the Shula offense and learn the new terminology and schemes of the Saban-Applewhite-Pendley offense.

A full year in the offense should make Wilson a much stronger quarterback. He goes into 2008 having won the award as most valuable offensive player in Bama's Independence Bowl win over Colorado.

Wilson will be working with his third quarterbacks coach and offensive coordinator in his three years as a starter as Major Applewhite left those jobs at Bama to return to his alma mater, Texas, this winter.

The most critical losses to the offense are at wide receiver. D.J. Hall was one of Bama's all-time bests, a record-breaker of all sorts of receiving marks. Matt Caddell had a big senior year and Keith Brown had his moments.

There are some solid prospects returning, including seniors Nikita Stover (who has seen a lot of action) and Will Oakley (not as much) and junior Mike McCoy. As this is written, it is not known if Julio Jones will join the Bama receiving corps. Obviously, he would be expected to work into the rotation. There are other young players (Earl Alexander, Brandon Gibson, Darius Hanks, Marquis Maze) and others who are committed who could be

a factor. Historically, wide receiver is one of the positions in which newcomers can quickly contribute. One newcomer is incoming freshman Chris Jackson, a December high school graduate who entered The University in the spring semester.

Saban doesn't have any problem with "Tailback by Committee." In fact, it is his preference to have at least a two-tailback rotation. But he wants it to be his choice, which was not always the case in 2007. Terry Grant got off to a great start last fall, but then fell to an injury that sidelined him late in the season. Glen Coffee has plenty of talent, but he was out of action for four games as part of the textbook problem in Bama athletics last fall. Roy Upchurch has been a back-up tailback.

Demetrius Goode, who was lost for the year with a knee injury suffered in fall camp, returns for his redshirt freshman year. And Bama has commitments from a handful of outstanding tailback prospects as the Tide attempts to build depth at this position.

The fullback position may be headed to extinction at Alabama. More often, Bama has used a tight end (usually Travis McCall) as an H-back. It remains to be seen how Alabama will operate as a base offense. When Alabama used a true fullback last fall it was Baron Huber. Jeramie Griffin was redshirted last year. Listed as a fullback, he might be a big tailback in the future.

Saban seems convincing when he says that he wants tight end to be more than an additional blocker. Blocking will always be an important task for the tight end, but at Alabama there is evidence the offense really does intend for the tight end to be a receiver.

Alabama's offense started two tight ends more often (nine times) than not (four times) in 2007.

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Walker was the leader among tight ends as a pass catcher with 23 receptions for 204 yards and two touchdowns. In addition to Walker and McCall, the Tide returns Preston Dial and Charles Hoke and is bringing in true freshman Undra Billingsley.

In football, it's often what's up front that counts. Good teams have good linemen. Alabama has one of the nation's best in offensive left tackle Andre Smith. Antoine Caldwell would rank among the elite at any offensive line position, though he's generally listed as a center.

Alabama lost two experienced linemen to graduation, starting left guard Justin Britt and Chris Capps, who was a starter at left tackle in 2004, a starter at right tackle in 2005 and 2006, and primarily a back-up at both spots last season.

In addition to Smith and Caldwell, a number of Tide offensive linemen with considerable experience return for 2008. They include center Evan Cardwell, guard Marlon Davis, and Mike Johnson and B.J. Stabler, both of whom have started at both guard and tackle positions.

(One reason it is difficult to pinpoint positions for Tide offensive linemen is that Line Coach Joe Pendley has them learn different positions and doesn't hesitate to move the men to new spots.)

The back-ups include highly regarded youngsters, sophs David Ross and Taylor Pharr and redshirt freshmen William Vlachos and Patrick Crump.

DEFENSE

Nick Saban has a bigger imprint on defense than he does on offense. Although there were letdowns by the defense in 2007, all in all the rebuilt unit (both in personnel and scheme) did about as well as could be expected.

Alabama finished 28th in the nation in rushing defense, allowing 124.2 yards per game; 38th in passing defense, allowing 221.3 yards per game; and 27th in scoring defense (22 points per game).

Now it must be rebuilt again. Alabama lost five starters from the 2007 unit, and Bama had lost six starters following the 2006 season.

Alabama calls its defense a 3-4, but often the jack linebacker is on the line with an end moved inside and Bama has a 4-3 look. Moreover, as Saban pointed out, the Tide frequently used five defensive backs, and sometimes six.

For convenience sake, we'll look at Alabama's prospects



John Parker Wilson will be senior quarterback

Stuart McNair Photo

for the 2008 defense based on a 3-4 alignment.

In the 3-4, there are two inside linebackers, Middle (or Mike) and Weakside (Will) and two outside linebackers, Strongside (Sam) and Jack. Alabama lost Darren Mustin, the starter at Will, and Keith Saunders, the Jack.

Rolando McClain earned Freshman All-America at Mike linebacker, where he shared playing time with Prince Hall, a Freshman All-America in 2006. Many project McClain to change positions, perhaps to an outside spot, perhaps to Will.

Former running back Jimmy Johns moved to inside linebacker for Independence

Bowl practice and that may have been the most interesting story of bowl preparation. Both Saban and Johns indicated the experiment might take awhile, that perhaps it wouldn't work. The jury is still out, but almost everyone involved—coaches and players—commented on what great progress Johns made at his new position.

Another experiment at linebacker worked very well last fall. Ezekial Knight, a former wide receiver who had experimented at defensive end in 2006, took over the Sam linebacker spot last fall and had a very fine year. He'll be back for his senior season. Brandon Fanney is the top returning back-up at Jack, but he had very little playing time.

Alabama has a large number of mostly inexperienced linebackers who will be plugged in at various spots on the depth chart.

Bama's best defensive player in 2007, left end Wallace Gilberry, is among those who have been graduated. The other two starters on the defensive line, right end Bobby Greenwood and tackle Lorenzo Washington, are back. Brandon Deaderick got playing time on the defensive line, but not many others did. Luther Davis and Milton Talbert are most likely end candidates with Deaderick.

Washington didn't get much help at nose tackle last season. Brian Motley was expected to win that job, but suffered a pre-season injury. True freshmen in 2007 Nick Gentry (who might move to end), Alfred McCullough, and Josh Chapman all battled injuries while trying to contribute at tackle.

Rashad Johnson, a former walk-on running back, has been a most pleasant surprise as a member of the secondary. Last year he led the Tide with 94 tackles and six interceptions.

The other safety, Marcus Carter, has graduated, but because of its nickel and dime packages, Bama has some men with safety-type experience who could be expected to join Johnson at the deep spots.

Most interesting has been Javier Arenas, best known for his play as a kickoff and punt return man. Before being injured late in the 2007 season, Arenas had moved up from almost a non-factor early in the season to the main man when Alabama was in a six-man secondary alignment.

Also making some good plays as a nickel/dime back was former running back Ali Sharrief, who was also injured part of the season. Other possible safety candidates who have seen playing time are Chris Rogers, Justin Woodall (who is expected to split time between baseball and spring football practice), and Sam Burnthall.

One of the most pleasant surprises for the Alabama defense was the work of true freshman Kareem Jackson at cornerback. He was a starter from the first game and had a very solid season, earning Freshman All-SEC and All-America honors.

The other cornerback spot is probably wide open. Lionel Mitchell had some starts, but was not consistent. Marquis Johnson and Tyrone King are possibilities. There could be shuffling of some players to shore up the secondary.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Alabama will have a new special teams coordinator as Ron Middleton left the staff to become associate head coach at Duke. Although putting together the kicking teams is a cooperative effort by the coaching staff, Middleton deserves credit for Alabama being very much improved last year.

The biggest surprise probably was Leigh Tiffin taking the placekicking job from Jamie Christensen, who was never able to fight back from injury in his senior year. Tiffin came through in a big way and was one of the nation's most effective field goal and extra point kickers. He led the SEC and was third in the nation with 1.92 field goals per game. He was less consistent on kickoffs, but showed improvement in that area.

The punting game was less encouraging. Although P.J. Fitzgerald has a strong leg and had his moments in his sophomore season, he has not been consistent.

A new face in spring drills will be incoming

freshman Corey Smith, who like wide receiver Chris Jackson was a December high school graduate and will participate.

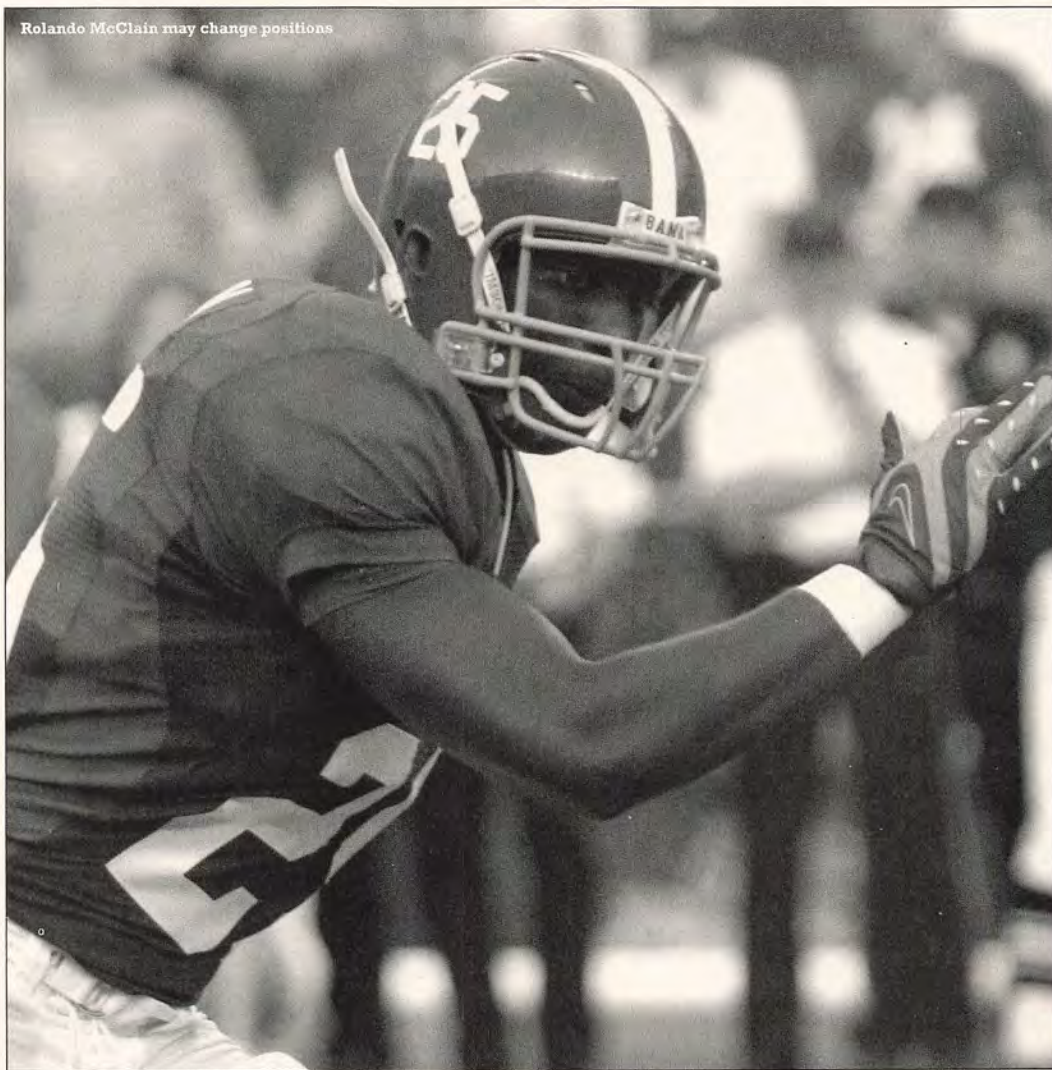
It is never a surprise when a walk-on emerges as the leading kicker and it is probable that there will be non-scholarshipped participants in the spring.

Two aspects of the kicking game are snapper and holder. Alabama returns Brian Selman for his senior year. He was very good in his first season as the snapper on punts and placekicks. The kicker usually gets to choose his holder. It helps if that man is the punter, as was the case last year. That's because other players are involved in practice and can't devote as much time to the chore as can a fellow member of the special teams.

Alabama has an outstanding return specialist in Javier Arenas. Last year Jonathan Lowe was his fellow deep receiver on kickoffs until Lowe was injured, and it is likely those two will be the kickoff return men with Arenas the back man on punts. Arenas was seventh in the nation and second in the conference as he averaged 15.92 yards per punt return.

There are limits to how much of the kicking game will be installed in spring practice. Special teams units in protection, coverage and returns frequently include newcomers, meaning fall camp is the time for finalizing those squads. ■

Rolando McClain may change positions



Stuart McNair Photo

DEPTH CHART BY CLASS

Here is a look at Alabama's depth chart by class (which is not the same as a depth chart), including incoming freshmen based on commitments through the end of December 2007. This is based on observations of Alabama games and guesses regarding those who have not played. It is near certain to be changed beginning no later than spring practice. It does not include every player on the roster.

OFFENSE

POSITION	SENIOR	JUNIOR	SOPHOMORE	REDSHIRT FRESHMAN	INCOMING FRESHMAN
Wide Receiver	Oakley	McCoy	Alexander	Maze	Barron Hood
Wide Receiver	Stover		Sikes	Gibson Hanks	Ray Bolton Smelley C. Jackson Love
Left Tackle	C. Davis	A. Smith D. Davis			
Left Guard		Deaton	Ross	Crump	Boswell
Center	Caldwell	Cardwell		Vlachos	
Right Guard	M. Davis		Pharr		
Right Tackle	Stabler	Mi. Johnson			Jones
Tight End	Walker McCall Hoke	Peek	Dial	Underwood	Billingsley M. Williams
Quarterback	Wilson		McElroy	Fanuzzi	S. Jackson
Tailback	Lowe	Coffee Upchurch	Grant	Goode	Jordan Matchett Preyear
Fullback		Huber Powell	Hanrahan	Griffin	
Placekicker		Tiffin Friedman			C. Smith

DEFENSE

Left End		Deaderick	Talbert	Elder	Hightower Upshaw
Noseguard		Washington Cody	Motley	Chapman McCullough Gentry	Square Murphy
Right End	Greenwood		L. Davis		Lewis
Strongside Linebacker	Knight	Reamer	C. Williams Kirschman	Watkins	
Middle Linebacker		Hall	McClain		
Weakside Linebacker	Johns		Robinson		
Jack Linebacker		Fanney Anders	Higgenbotham	Hester	
Left Cornerback			K. Jackson	Farmer	Green
Right Cornerback	Mitchell	Ma. Johnson King	Coger	Lett	Scott
Strong Safety		Sharrief Rogers			Neighbors
Safety	R. Johnson	Arenas Woodall Burnthall			Lester
Punter		Fitzgerald			

Opening In Atlanta

2008 Alabama schedule completed

It is not unusual for Alabama to be a leader in the world of college football. As one of the handful of truly elite programs, the college football world looks to the Crimson Tide. Bama has a tradition in bowls and in national championships and in Hall of Fame coaches and players.

A recent "tradition" has been Alabama's method in providing outstanding non-conference football games without the financial hardship of a home-and-home arrangement. For the second consecutive year, Bama will play a high-profile football game at a neutral site.

On August 30, Alabama will open its season against Clemson in a game played at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta.

Complete details will be announced later, but it is expected that the game will be nationally televised by either ABC or ESPN with kickoff in prime time. Both teams will receive 33,000 tickets. It was determined by coin toss that Clemson will be the home team and that officials will come from the Southeastern Conference.

Alabama had to juggle its schedule a bit. Western Kentucky had been scheduled to open the season. Western Kentucky will now be on October 13. It was also revealed that Alabama will be playing Arkansas State rather than Northern Illinois on November 1.

There was some stir among Georgia Tech faithful in that the Yellow Jackets will be opening the season that day and introducing their new head coach, Paul Johnson. Jacksonville State will provide the opposition for Tech.

Alabama played a non-conference game at a neutral site in 2007, falling to Florida State 21-14 in Jacksonville. The game drew 85,412 fans, setting an attendance record in Jacksonville Municipal Stadium.

The Alabama-Clemson game will be administered by the Chick-Fil-A Bowl, which gave credit to Alabama Athletics Director Mal Moore for providing "impetus in really moving this game forward."

Moore said that work had begun on the game early in

2008 ALABAMA FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

DATE	OPPONENT	SITE	SERIES RECORD
Aug. 30	Clemson	Atlanta	UofA leads 11-3
Sept. 6	Tulane	Tuscaloosa	UofA leads 26-11-3
Sept. 13	Western Kentucky	Tuscaloosa	First Meeting
Sept. 20	Arkansas	Fayetteville	UofA leads 11-7-0
Sept. 27	Georgia	Athens	UofA leads 35-25-4
Oct. 4	Kentucky	Tuscaloosa	UofA leads 33-2-1
Oct. 18	Ole Miss	Tuscaloosa	UofA leads 44-9-2
Oct. 25	Tennessee	Knoxville	UofA leads 45-38-7
Nov. 1	Arkansas State	Tuscaloosa	UofA leads 1-0-0
Nov. 8	LSU	Baton Rouge	UofA leads 43-23-5
Nov. 15	Mississippi State	Tuscaloosa	UofA leads 72-17-3
Nov. 29	Auburn	Tuscaloosa	UofA leads 38-33-1
Dec. 6	SEC Championship	Atlanta	2 wins, 3 losses

2007, following the concept of the FSU game in Jacksonville. He noted that it is a one-game event.

"I think it's a great opportunity for our football players, our football team and our fans to have an opportunity to play against an outstanding opponent like Clemson, who has a great football team," said Alabama Coach Nick Saban.

"For Alabama to be able to play in Atlanta, which is a great city in the South, is certainly something that we look forward to. It's a great opportunity for us; it's great for national exposure, it's great for recruiting. I've always been an advocate of trying to play games that bring national attention to the program. It's interesting for the fans and I think this will be an outstanding venue."

Alabama and Clemson have met 14 times on the gridiron, with the Tide holding an 11-3 advantage in the series that dates back to 1900. The most recent meeting between the two teams came in 1975, with the Tide earning a 56-0 win over the Tigers in Tuscaloosa.

The Tide finished its 2007 season with a win over Colorado in the PetroSun Independence Bowl and a 7-6 record in Saban's first year as head coach at The Capstone. Clemson earned a 9-4 mark in 2007, including an overtime loss to Auburn in the Chick-Fil-A Bowl in Atlanta to finish the season.

Although subject to change, among opponents on Alabama future schedules are Penn State (home in 2010 and away in 2011), Duke at a site to be determined in 2010, and Georgia Tech (home in 2012 and in Atlanta in 2014).

Little Man Thinks Big

Arenas one of best Tide return men ever

For Alabama's Javier Arenas, a great return doesn't begin when the ball is kicked. The process starts a long time before that.

During quiet times in their apartment after practice, Arenas and his roommate, Crimson Tide running back Terry Grant, will talk about the upcoming game and what they might like to accomplish in it. Arenas usually thinks big.

"We always talk before we come over to Bryant-Denny Stadium on Saturdays and he'll always tell me what he's going to do," Grant said. "I'm not the kind of guy that will actually talk about what I'm going to do, I just go out and do it. But he likes to talk about it, trying to make himself get the feel for what he's going to do.

"He doesn't lack confidence at all."

It's perhaps that belief in himself that has turned Arenas, entering his junior year at Alabama, into one of the top kick-return men in the country. He recently finished off a sophomore season that ranks among the best in Bama history.

Arenas led the Crimson Tide in both kickoff and punt returns, averaging 15.4 yards on 21 punt returns and 24.3 yards on 27 kickoff runbacks. His punt-return average—spiked by a memorable 61-yard touchdown against LSU—ranks third in school history among players with at least 20 returns in a season.

Only Harry Gilmer in 1947 (18.1-yard average on 21 returns) and David Palmer in 1991 (16.1-yard average on 24 returns) have done better. Solid company.

"He has special return ability," Alabama Coach Nick Saban said. "He has good judgment. He usually handles the ball well and possesses the ball well, which is really important I think when you're a specialist. But then he adds to that with great quickness and return ability and good vision as a runner. He has a burst to get up the field and use his blockers well, and (he) can make people miss and run through some tackles."

Seemingly nothing could stop Arenas in 2007, though an ankle injury suffered against Louisiana-Monroe on November 17 came closest. Arenas was hit low on a punt return in the second quarter—he later said he initially thought he had broken his leg—and limped off the field with a high ankle sprain.

Arenas missed the regular-season finale against Auburn, but came back strong in the Independence Bowl against Colorado. He totaled 76 yards on three returns, not counting a 51-yard kickoff runback that was called back by a penalty.

Teams tried everything in 2007—squib kicks, sky kicks, kicks out of bounds, but still Arenas made big plays. He had five returns of at least 50 yards this season: a 69-yarder

against Vanderbilt, a 58-yarder against Arkansas, a 54-yarder against Ole Miss, a 57-yarder against Tennessee and a 61-yarder against LSU.

Arenas scored on his return against LSU, and nearly did against Vanderbilt and Arkansas (running the ball back to inside the 5-yard line on each). His big return against Ole Miss set up Alabama's game-tying score.

"When I'm out there, I'm not thinking 'Why aren't they kicking it to me?,'" Arenas said. "I'm just hoping that they kick it to me. If they kick it to me, let's just do what we do—make plays."

Looking back, though, the fact that Arenas became a star with the Crimson Tide might seem like destiny.

He had the bloodlines. Arenas' cousin, Gilbert, is one of the best players in the NBA.

He had the numbers. Arenas returned seven kickoffs or punts for touchdowns as a senior at Class 3A Robinson High School in Tampa, Florida, in 2005.

But what Arenas lacked was the opportunity.

Despite his gaudy numbers, Arenas was a virtual unknown at the beginning of the 2006 recruiting season. He had a few scholarship offers, sure, from the likes of Florida Atlantic, Bethune-Cookman, Florida International, Florida A&M and Bowling Green.

One coach from a prominent Southeastern Conference school (not Alabama) even told the 5-foot-9, 190-pound Arenas that he was too small to play big-time college football.

But then along came former Crimson Tide Special Teams Coach Dave Ungerer, who recruited south Florida during his time at Alabama.

Ungerer immediately fell in love with Arenas' ability, and set about convincing former Alabama Coach Mike Shula to offer Arenas a scholarship. Shula wasn't sure at first if he could spare one for a kick-return specialist, but Ungerer eventually talked him into it.

"Coach Ungerer, I guess he saw something special in me," Arenas said. "I bow down to that man, now. Coach Ungerer believed in me, when absolutely no one else would give me this opportunity. He made it possible.

"That whole process was strenuous on him, trying to convince (Shula) to give me a scholarship. And me, I was on stand-by, as opposed to these other guys who have coaches on stand-by."

Arenas didn't waste much time paying Ungerer back. He seized the Crimson Tide's primary kickoff and punt return duties early in fall practice in 2006, and is yet to relinquish them.

Arenas' first big moment in crimson came in the second scrimmage of that first fall, when he wowed a large crowd at Bryant-Denny Stadium (scrimmages were open to the public and the media then) with a twisting and turning punt return for a touchdown.

He had a several highlights in the return game as a true freshman, including two touchdowns—one against Florida International during the regular season and another in the Independence Bowl against Oklahoma State. Arenas ended his freshman year with a 19.1-yard average on 18 kickoff returns and a 9.2-yard average on 31 punt returns.

Even before that, Arenas had made an impression on fellow 2006 freshman Grant, with whom he had a lot in common. Like Arenas, Grant was a smallish player (5-9, 188) from a small school (Class 2A Lumberton High in Mississippi).

"You knew he was a hard worker," Grant said. "We work out together and I kind of felt we were on the same level. We're both from small schools. He told me stories about how people didn't recruit him much. He's similar to me, being kind of small, they wanted you to play different positions."

Speaking of different positions, Arenas also became a key factor on defense as a sophomore. He entered the season as the primary back-up to starting free safety Rashad Johnson, but eventually worked his way onto the field at nickel corner.

Arenas played extensively on defense, finishing the year with 20 tackles, two tackles for loss and a pass breakup. He was beaten for a touchdown in the final minutes of a 41-34 loss to LSU on November 3 (just moments after scoring on a punt return to give the Tide the lead), but otherwise showed signs of vast improvement as a defender in 2007.

"I know the plays, I'm more relaxed," Arenas said. "I feel like it's me now. I get back there and (opponents) line up, and then all of a sudden they motion to a totally different formation before the snap. I used to panic and not know what to do, play a little timid out there. But now, that same situation occurs, I adjust and know exactly what to do, who I've got. I think that was my issue at first, it wasn't that I couldn't cover or anything like that. I just didn't know what to do. I couldn't play relaxed and confident. But I can do that now."

But Arenas will likely always be best known as a return man, probably Alabama's best since the legendary David "Deuce" Palmer was running up and down Bryant-Denny Stadium in the early 1990s. Arenas, who was born in 1987, is too young to remember seeing Palmer play for the Crimson Tide.

Instead, he patterns himself after another return specialist from south Florida, former University of Miami star and current Chicago Bears great Devin Hester. The 5-10, 185-pound Hester has 11 kick-return touchdowns—seven on punts and four on kickoffs—in his two-year NFL career.

"You haven't got any choice but to watch him; he's all over TV," Arenas said. "I don't see how he does it, man. He does it on a professional level better than he did in college. That surprises me. He's the man, the best that does it in the pros."

"He's electrifying. I don't watch him and try to learn moves from him, but just watching him gives me confidence knowing I can do that. It just gives me hype."



Javier Arenas was among nation's best in returns

University of Alabama

Like Arenas, Hester's nominal position is defensive back, though the Bears began to use him periodically on offense in 2007. Hester had nine receptions for 154 yards and a touchdown this past season.

Saban said there are no immediate plans to utilize Arenas on offense just yet, though that might be a possibility in the future. If he's said the same to Arenas, Javier's not letting on.

"I haven't heard anything about that, (but) I wouldn't mind at all," Arenas said. "I know I could do it. Wherever I'm needed, I'm ready to play."

"I feel as though if there's something you don't like playing football, you shouldn't be playing—even if it's just kicking field goals."

So is the world ready for Javier Arenas, the kick returner/punt returner/cornerback/wide receiver/kicker?

Grant, for one, wouldn't be surprised.

"The mindset that he has, he can play anywhere he wants to on the field," Grant said. "If you want to do it, you can do it."

And wanting to has never been a problem for Arenas. ■

Hot Corner Hopeful

Jake Smith to handle third base for Tide

Throughout Alabama's baseball history, especially during the Coach Jim Wells era, the Birmingham suburb of Hueytown has been very good for the Tide baseball program. Former Hueytown Golden Gophers Jeremy Brown, Brett Taft and Jayson Cox are but a few examples. The latest: sophomore third baseman Jake Smith, a 6-foot-2, 190-pounder who has shaken off an injury-plagued freshman season and appears ready to step up and contribute for Wells and his 2008 Crimson Tide.

"Jake's an excellent third baseman," Wells said. "We need him in the lineup every day. He has improved quite a bit from his freshman year."

Wells said Smith is now better at "being able to cover the outer half of the plate, and to deal with adversity like we all have to. This guy can hit home runs. He can be an All-America-type player. He's grown up. He, like the rest of us, had to get tougher. as you learn when you play in the SEC. I see all those signs.

"Last year, people got him out throwing the slider. He knows that he's going to have to show people that he can take that for a ball, and then later, start being able to drive that ball. He knows what he has to do, and he's worked extremely hard. He will be a better player this year."

Smith says he's also worked on hitting the breaking ball. "I did decent enough in the field last year, but I struggled a lot hitting," he said. "I've worked on seeing curve balls a lot off a (pitching) machine, and things like that. Getting a lot of reps off the (hitting) tee. Mainly just coming in early, and getting a lot of swings in with the new coaches. They've helped me out tremendously with my swing, and just to my everyday approach, to come out and play hard, and practice hard. You've got to practice hard, and you've got to practice like you play."

New coaches on the staff include Dax Norris, a former Tide catcher, and Mitch Gaspard, who returned to Tuscaloosa for a second stint under Wells.

One of the top players in Tide baseball history was current Cincinnati Reds and ex-Yankees player Andy Phillips. Could Smith, who like Phillips is a tall third baseman, be that type player before his Tide career is over? Wells was asked to compare the two at this stage of their Tide careers.

"At third base, they're very similar," Wells said. "They look like big-leaguers over there. Phillips was a different type hitter."

Wells explained that most of Phillips' power was to the opposite field while Smith is a dead-pull hitter. "Jake needs to get to a point, like Phillips did, where he can stay through a ball and hit it the other way," the coach said. "If he starts doing that, then he'll take off, like Phillips did."

Smith is optimistic. "I think I can be that good, but I've got a

lot of work to do, to get to where (Phillips) was when he was here," Smith said. "I've been compared to him, growing up, and I think if I keep working hard enough, I can get there."

Smith hit .246 and started 39 of the 40 games he was able to play in last year before a leg injury sidelined him. He hit six homers and drove in 29 runs. He hit five doubles and finished with a .433 slugging percentage.

Wells says Smith was not a tough sell during his recruitment. "Jake was an 'Alabama boy,' so being from Hueytown, we caught a break there. Like Andy (Phillips), Jake was pretty sincere. He pretty much wanted to go to Alabama, so the recruiting process wasn't extremely long, and there were no games played. We wanted him here, and he pretty much wanted to come here. It was good. We sat down with the mom and dad, and they kind of wanted him to be here. We both knew that this was the place for him to go.

"He came to our camp, and I saw him the summer of his sophomore year, and he was a really good pitcher. Then, after his junior year, I saw him (again), and I started reading about him that he was hitting 20-plus home runs (for Hueytown High). He was a dual-type player. We (briefly) tried to make him a pitcher, but definitely he's a third baseman and a middle of the lineup-type hitter, with power."

Smith confirms. "I grew up a big Alabama fan," he said. "I used to go, when I was a young kid, up to the SEC Tournament (in Hoover), and I watched a lot of Alabama games growing up. Being an Alabama fan, it has been a life-long dream to come here. Coach Wells gave me that opportunity, and I'm very thankful for it. Once I got my offer from Alabama, it was just, 'no questions asked.'" Smith said he did give brief, but serious, consideration to Birmingham Southern before he got his written Tide offer.

"Growing up, I knew Jeremy (Brown) from around Hueytown, and I got to watch him play here," Smith said, adding that, "My step-dad (Robby Tibbs) actually coached Brett Taft, who was a great player here."

Smith broke some of Brown's Hueytown records, including homers in a season with 20 as a junior. He followed that up by slugging 17 as a senior as teams pitched around him. The 20 round-trippers Smith jacked as a junior were the most by a Birmingham metro player since McAdory's Bo Jackson belted 20 in 1982 before heading off for Auburn, the NFL and MLB. Smith hit .489 as a junior and .432 his senior season. As a pitcher, he set school records for wins and strikeouts in a season for Golden Gophers Coach Rick Patterson.

"I grew up coming through Coach Patterson's system, and it was really hard," said Smith, while admitting that playing for a top

program like Hueytown and a coach like Patterson got him ready for the rigors of the SEC. "He prepared us very well to come play at the next level. The rigorous training that we went through in high school really prepared me to come here."

When not pitching for the Gophers, Smith played shortstop, but he realizes he is at his best position for now and the future. "I'm getting bigger, and I think third base is the best suit for me. You just have to have a strong enough arm to play third, and I think I do decent enough to play there now."

Though one scout said Smith had more tools at this stage of his career than Phillips did, that same scout felt Smith would end up a catcher at the next level. Wells is not so sure. "He could play anything for us, really, but at the next level, I think third base is definitely his position. No question about it. I think where he's playing (now) is where he should be playing for the rest of his life."

Wells said Smith is not quite ready to hit in the middle of the Tide order. "He'll have to improve, to do that immediately, but my hope, and my best guess is, before the year's out, he'll be there. It'd be nice to put Smith in the five-hole."

Smith is ready to move up when Wells gives the word. "He wants me to hit in the middle of the order, and drive in runs" Smith said. "Also, be a team leader, on the field and off the field. Hopefully, I can do that."

The rest of the infield, as Smith sees it, will include junior Jeff Texada at short, sophomore Brandon May at second, and fifth-year senior Matt Bentley at first. "Matt Bentley, he's really the team leader," Smith said. "He puts everybody on his back and carries us, though workouts and all that."

One name fighting for playing time at both middle infield spots is Ross Wilson, younger brother of Tide quarterback John Parker Wilson and two-year star of the MTV series "Two-A-Days," which chronicled the Hoover High football program.

"Ross is a very good ball player," Smith said. "He's really athletic so I think he could come in and play pretty much any position on the infield besides first. Coaches have worked him in the outfield. He can run. He's just a good ball player, and I think he'll find his way somewhere in the field."

Wilson's MTV fame often causes amusing moments when he and his teammates are out, or even just in the locker room, as the freshman's face is known everywhere. Smith says wherever they are, people recognize Wilson. "Oh yeah. All the time," Smith smiled. "We'll go out to eat, and people will say 'That's Ross Wilson!' at dinner and stuff. He'll take a few pictures here and there. We give him a hard time about it in the locker room. We have a good time with him, but he's a good sport. He takes it in stride."

While Wilson may well break into the Tide lineup at some point, it's not likely to be at the "hot corner." Smith seems to have a firm grip on that position for at least the next two years. After that, he'll possibly have the chance to join Phillips and Brown at the next level. ■

Jake Smith has big league potential



University of Alabama



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Prime Condition

Men's team should be national contender

The University of Alabama men's tennis team looks to improve on its success from 2007 in 2008. After only losing one senior from last year's 20-win squad, the Crimson Tide is in prime condition to be a national contender two years in a row.

Under Coach Billy Pate's guidance, the Alabama men's tennis team has seen remarkable success in his short tenure. Last year, the squad reached the NCAA Sweet 16 before being knocked off by Baylor. The Crimson Tide also secured 22 wins, the most of any Tide team in 20 years, and ended the season with four ranked individuals, three of whom are on this season's roster.

The Crimson Tide ended 2007 with a number 14 national ranking, tying the 1983 team for the third-highest final ranking in school history. The 14th place finish is also the highest ranking since 1993, when the Tide ended the season in ninth place. For his team's success, Pate was honored with the Southeastern Conference Co-Coach of the Year and NCAA Regional Coach of the Year awards as well as a National Coach of the Year nomination.

And this year's squad enters spring play ranked 13th in the nation.

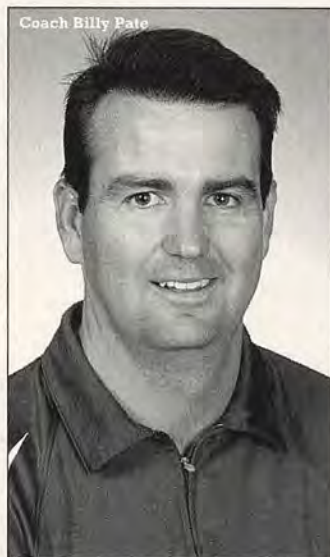
Although the Tide saw remarkable success in 2007, the returning players are eager to get back on the court and make a run for the SEC Championship.

There is a huge void to fill. The lone senior on last year's team was Joseph Jung, who finished his career as the winningest in Alabama history. He produced 20 or more wins in each of his four seasons at The Capstone.

Pate should get good leadership this year, though, with five returning seniors.

Among the talented players are two nationally ranked singles players and two nationally ranked doubles tandems.

Senior all-SEC performer Billy Mertz returns as a



candidate for the Tide's top singles spot. The 42nd-ranked Mertz jumped three spots in the lineup last year and ended the season at number one. Mertz, who received second-team All-SEC honors after posting 25 singles wins last season, had a huge win over ninth-rated Luis Flores from Florida that put him in contention for his first national ranking of the season.

Junior Mathieu Thibaudeau will contend for a spot in the top of the Tide lineup after he put in a solid performance last spring. Thibaudeau was one of three Tide players to earn 20 wins last year. Thibaudeau continued to improve his singles game during the fall and defeated No. 14 Philippe Frayssinoux of Mississippi State at the ITA Regional Tournament this past October to spring him into the ITA rankings for the second time in his career. He is ranked 99th in the nation.

In doubles, junior Mathieu Thibaudeau teams up this spring with junior Daniel Buikema to form the number five pre-season nationally ranked doubles team. Senior Sammy Struyf and sophomore Saketh Myneni are at number 34 in the doubles rankings. Mertz and senior Javier Bes form the 53rd ranked pre-season doubles team.

Other Tide players expected to make a contribution in the lineup are Bes, who earned 23 singles wins and 26 doubles victories in 2007, Myneni, Struyf, redshirt junior Andrew Felsenthal, and transfer Michael Jung.

In addition to tournament action in Hawaii and in the SEC Indoor Tournament as a part of the spring schedule, Bama was to meet non-conference opponents Southern Miss, Troy, Furman, Georgia State and Indiana before the SEC schedule begins and was to travel to California to face Cal-Irvine and Pepperdine.

In SEC play, Alabama will host six SEC teams to Tuscaloosa this season, including last year's national champion Georgia, March 28. LSU, Tennessee and Auburn—which all advanced to the NCAA Championships last May—will also travel to Tuscaloosa this spring.

On the road, Alabama will face two of last year's Sweet 16 teams on their home courts when the Tide travels to Ole Miss and Florida. Alabama will also face Mississippi State, Vanderbilt and South Carolina, in addition to taking on Samford and UAB in Birmingham before the NCAA Regionals, May 9-11.

Billy Mertz is top returning Tide men's tennis player





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GRAB LIFE BY THE HORNS



Experience Counts

Women's team has grown up since 2007

The 19th century Irish writer Oscar Wilde said, "Experience is one thing you can't get for nothing." In the case of The University of Alabama women's tennis team, the young 2007 squad battled through a tough season to gain the experience and poise necessary to be a Southeastern Conference contender in 2008.

The team fought through injuries, line-up changes and inconsistent performances last season in order to get to a place where the players feel they can make an impact this season. The 2007 squad showed potential as it was on the brink of a breakthrough all season. It was the story of a season where one more point could have turned the tables for the Tide.

"We have a young team again, for the most part, but the keys to success are our enthusiasm, character and depth," said Alabama Coach Jenny Mainz. "The experiences that happened to us last year were positive. We ended the season 5-16, but we were close in a lot of matches.

"We had five 4-3 losses against big teams and that won't happen this year. The team gained a lot of confidence from those matches last year and that will give them an extra benefit as they come across similar situations this season."

The Crimson Tide fans will see a similar make-up to the 2008 team as they saw a year ago except this team returns to the court with a chip on its shoulder. Once again, Alabama will be led by a lone senior. This year the job goes to Andrea Brenes, a senior from San Jose, Costa Rica, who emerged as a top doubles player last season.

"I expect Andrea to be the lead horse on the doubles court this year," said Mainz. "I think she will make a big impact in doubles and could possibly qualify for the NCAA tournament in that arena. I look for Brenes to lead this team and take that job seriously next year."

Joining Brenes for another year at The Capstone are junior Shelley Godwin and sophomores Paulina Bigos, Bianca Svensson and Alice Tunaru. The five veterans are joined by two promising freshmen in Meritt Emery and Tiffany Welcher.

"We have charismatic, committed and tenacious players who



Coach Jenny Mainz

University of Alabama

really want to be here and that will be the biggest differences from last year. The team is more poised and more mature than a year ago and I do not feel like we are going to have to rely on our freshmen like we did last season."

Godwin returns for another season at The Capstone with two years of experience under her belt. In 2007, Godwin moved up three spots in the singles lineup from a year ago and led the team in conference doubles victories with partner Bianca Svensson.

As for the sophomores, last year they totaled 84 wins and competed in every conference match.

"Shelley, Bianca, Paulina and Alice will use what they learned last season to be more successful this season," said Mainz. "These girls have a lot to give and we are going to need them to do that every day."

However, with a core of experienced veterans returning, Coach Mainz predicts the two freshmen could contend for a spot in the lineup in 2008. Emery, hailing from Lexington, Kentucky, is an experienced tennis player who has been around the sport her entire life.

"Emery, obviously, has the experience and background it takes to make it at the next level," said Mainz. "She comes from a tennis family and she is a really solid Southern player who is excited to come and contribute to the program."

Welcher, a freshman from Clarksville, Indiana, brings athleticism and the will to win to the Capstone.

"Tiffany Welcher is one of the best athletes that I will have the privilege to coach and she is a resource of untapped potential," said Mainz. "She is strong, athletic and versatile and can hit the ball as well as anyone. I look for her to come in and make an immediate impact."

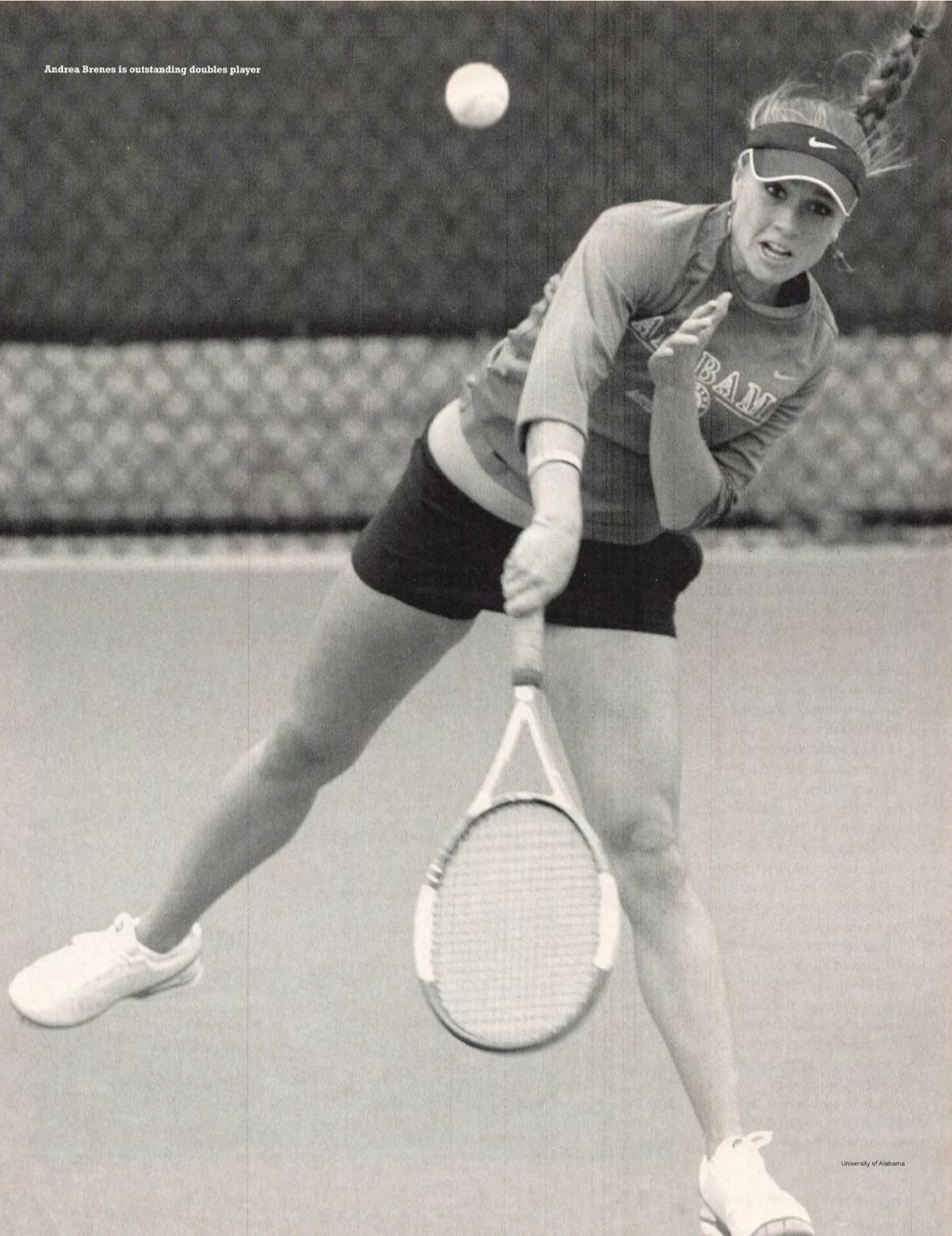
Coach Mainz and her team competed in five fall tournaments, including the Roberta Alison Classic in Tuscaloosa. Mainz considered the good play in the fall to be key for spring success as the team was able to "get into some experiences that will help us during the spring season and work out the kinks," said Mainz.

The team was to open the spring schedule with a trip to Hawaii followed by seven formidable opponents before heading into the always competitive SEC schedule.

"The fact that the team has gone through what it did last season, we will see a new look to the team," said Mainz. "I feel like we have the right people and the right schedule. We know we have a lot of work to do as a team and a coaching staff and we are not afraid of doing that work."

With a group that was on the brink of a breakthrough last season, add two accomplished freshmen and that will propel the Tide back into a position to be an SEC contender.

Andrea Brenes is outstanding doubles player



Maybe Unbeatable

Men's team takes aim at national title

Alabama Men's Golf Coach Jay Seawell can't tell you the exact day, tournament or reason. But he does remember the feeling.

"It just kind of dawned on me," Seawell said. "I remember sitting there thinking, 'Wow! We've got the program where we want it.'"

Heading into his sixth spring season at Alabama, Seawell has built his squad to what is arguably the top men's program on campus. Ask anybody. The Crimson Tide is loaded with talent and realistic hopes for the school's first golf national title.

"There's not many times where you line up a national championship run, meaning when if you play well, nobody can beat you," Seawell said. "We are as talented as anybody in the country. When we play our best, I don't think there's a team that can beat us."

Seawell arrived at Alabama from Augusta State, where he built a nationally competitive program at an unheralded school. He has done the same with the Crimson Tide, gradually recruiting the kind of prospects who have now played Alabama's team to a preseason ranking of number two in the nation, behind Georgia.

In a sport where five players are inserted in a lineup—and the worst score

Michael Thompson leads excellent Tide team



University of Alabama



Coach Jay Seawell

University of Alabama

doesn't count—the Tide looms tough to tackle.

"A coach is only as good as his talent," Seawell said, "so we had to go out and find the right guys—and guys that had opportunity to go anywhere—to believe that Alabama can. We had to convince people of that, that Alabama could be a national golf power."

"We're part of an elite group now," senior Michael Thompson said. "We have the depth to where anybody on

the team can win the golf tournament. It's just who plays best that week. It's a special place to be in. Not many teams get to feel that way."

There is Thompson, the Hurricane Katrina transfer from Tulane who became a U.S. Amateur finalist this past summer, earning a spot in this year's Masters and U.S. Open as a result.

Junior Mark Harrell emerged from a maze of qualifying to nearly make the cut at the U.S. Open. Junior Matthew Swan shot a 65 in his first-ever collegiate round. Senior Joseph Sykora set a new school record with a score of 14-under-par to win a tournament in 2006.

Senior Gator Todd, son of former Alabama quarterback Richard Todd, was a touted recruit and now an All-Southeastern Conference performer.

"I wouldn't say Alabama has ever really been known as a golf school," Todd said. "The past couple of years, we haven't been ranked outside the top three, I guess. Everybody has been kind of surprised. Nobody really has heard of the golf team until now. It's nice to kind of break through and do that."

The Tide won two tournaments this past fall, the Carpet Capital Collegiate in Dalton, Georgia, and its own Jerry Pate National Intercollegiate in Birmingham. In a way, it was like last season, where Alabama first put notice onto the national college golf scene by claiming its first three tournaments of the 2006-07 season.

Only then, it was basically a high-water mark. Alabama won once more last season, but finished one spot shy of the program's first SEC title since 1979. An NCAA tournament bid was a given, but the Tide didn't scare the leaders on the final day of the event.

It was a lesson to learn heading into 2007-08.

"We were all giddy. Heck, I was too," Seawell said. "We didn't handle well all the pressure that comes with being a great team. By the end of the year, I think there was a little bit of a burden on us. I think we've learned from that, and I think it will help us this year."

All the pieces are rounding into place. Thompson began hitting golf balls again in early January after breaking the ring finger on his left hand in October while catching a football.

"Nick Saban is not beating down his door, that's for sure,"



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Seawell said with a laugh.

Thompson will finish his senior season with Alabama before turning pro, making a detour to Augusta National in April. Since he qualified for the Masters, Thompson has had rare permission to play the storied course whenever he chose. But he wasn't able to while recovering from his broken finger.

"My approach is I want to do well," Thompson said, "but I've been told by a lot of people that I've met who've played there and been there to just enjoy the moment. Things like, 'Just soak it all up. Enjoy your presence there. Talk with the pros. They're going to be really nice to you. Enjoy the crowds. Enjoy the atmosphere.'"

"But at the same time, you try to still be focused. I'm trying to treat it as another tournament, even though it's not just another tournament. It's the Masters, the biggest tournament in the world."

Alabama's spring season was to begin February 17-19 at the John Hayt Intercollegiate in Jacksonville, Florida, followed by a trip to a beach tournament in Puerto Rico. By then, Seawell hopes to have his lineup pared down to about six players in the rotation for the course of the stretch run.

The SEC championships will be held April 18-20 in Sea Island, Georgia, with NCAA regionals May 17-19 leading up to the NCAA championships May 30-June 2 at Purdue's course in West Lafayette, Indiana.

"We really want it," Todd said, "so we're going to do all we can to bring that to us." ■

Thompson Halfway Home

Golf World has announced its mid-season awards for the first half of the 2007-08 collegiate golf season, and University of Alabama senior golfer Michael Thompson is among the men selected to the Mid-Season All-American Team.

The Tucson, Arizona, native followed his August U.S. Amateur finals appearance with a fall at Alabama that found him with a 68.67 stroke average in three fall tournament appearances. He shot under par in eight of his nine rounds and finished under par in all three tournaments. Thompson finished among the top three individuals in all three events, finishing second at the Carpet Capital Collegiate at 5-under par, and third at the TOPY Cup in Japan at 9-under par and third at the Jerry Pate National Intercollegiate at 13-under par.

Joining him on the Mid-Season All-American team are Jonas Blixt of Florida State, Ryan Brehm of Michigan State, Stefan Wiedergruen of Charlotte, Jonas Enander Hedin of Charlotte, Harris English of Georgia, Rickie Flower of Oklahoma State, Chesson Hadley of Georgia Tech, Clayton Rask of Minnesota, Joel Sjolholm of Georgia State, Ryan Spears of Wichita State and Mike Van Sickle of Marquette.

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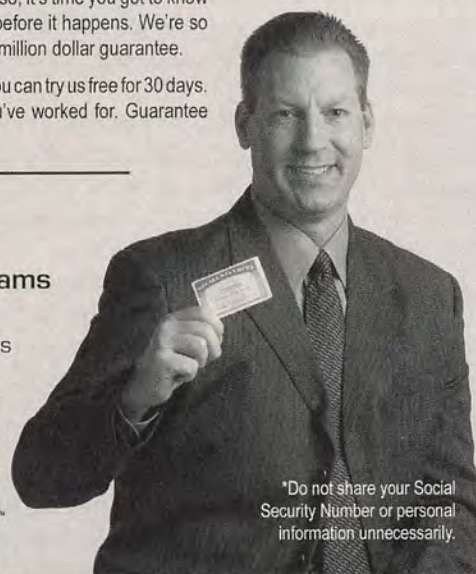
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Talent To Spare

Women's squad could be Potter's best

There have been subtle signs, but it was freshman Courtney Harter who triggered the alert that Alabama truly has become one to watch in women's golf.

In her first collegiate tournament, Harter slung a Crimson Tide golf bag over her shoulder and coolly shot a 5-under-par 67. It was a stunning debut, made more impressive two solid days later, when she claimed a first place trophy at last fall's Wildcat Invitational at the University of Kentucky.

Here's the catch: Harter's scores didn't count for Alabama's team. She participated on her own after not making Coach Mic Potter's five-player lineup for the event.

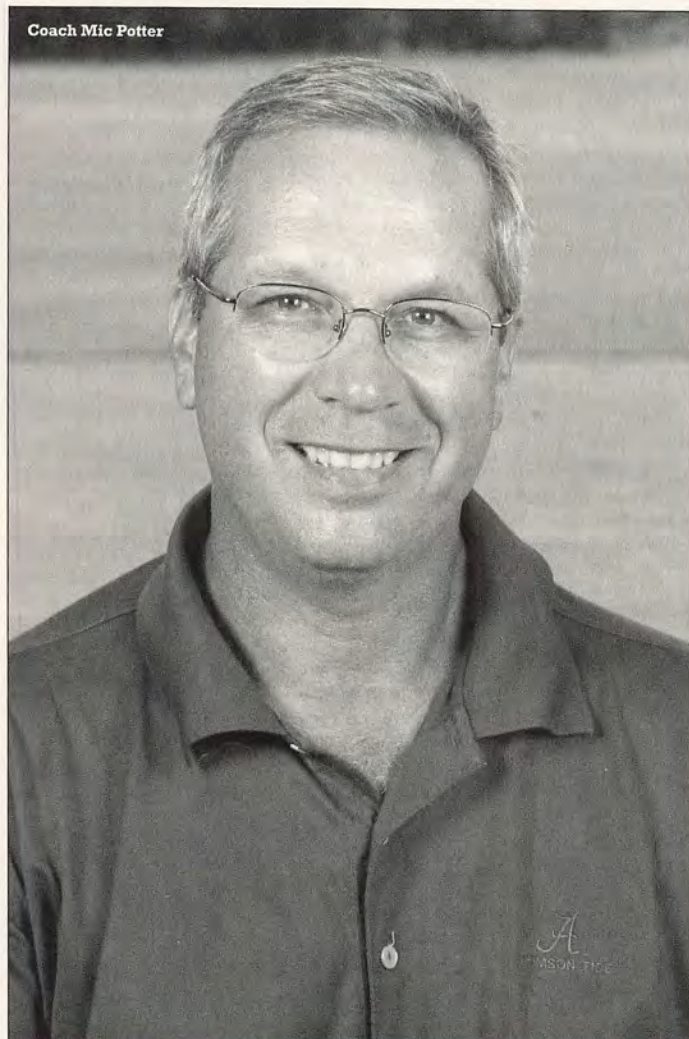
"It was stupid of a coach not to play her in that tournament," Potter recalled with a laugh. "We didn't get to count her score."

To Potter's relief, Harter's statistical absence didn't matter. Alabama's other players did well as Bama cruised to the top of the team standings, claiming the program's first tournament victory in nearly two years.

Clearly, it was a landmark. Not only did Alabama prove it could win again, it showed the rest of collegiate golf a newfound roster so deep that a player outside of the starting lineup could be the best golfer on the course.

"She proved that she could win at this level," Potter said. "That helps a lot as you get deep into the season and the postseason."

It's with a similar confidence that Alabama's entire



Coach Mic Potter

University of Alabama

team takes on the 2008 spring season. Potter, in his third year after leaving a successful program at Furman, has judged this to be the "most talented team I've ever had in my career."

"This year, things have finally all fallen together," said Sarah Sturm, the squad's lone senior. "We have a lot of talent. We have more competition with the team on the golf course than I've ever had."

Potter has taken Alabama to the NCAA championships each of his first two seasons, heady stuff for a program with a total of only three NCAA championship trips in its entire history. But it's no longer enough for Potter.

While the Tide reached the final stage last season, it shot a combined 111-over on a brutal LPGA International course in Daytona Beach, Florida, finishing 23rd out of 24 qualifying teams. The

champion, Duke, shot 18-over.

"We've been pretty happy just to get there the last couple of years," Potter said, "Certainly it was a step forward for our program to do that, but we need to go there with the additional goal of competing and contending now."

Alabama exited the fall season ranked number 16 in the Golfweek national rankings, a good number until you notice it's behind five other Southeastern Conference schools. Like other sports, the SEC is toughest in women's golf, but the Tide feels better equipped to handle the grind.

Leading the charge is talented junior Kathleen Ekey,

a former Potter recruit at Furman who has now transferred to join him at Alabama. Last year with the Paladins, Ekey tied for the East Regional title during the NCAA tournament before losing in a playoff.

"She's a girl who I anticipate winning multiple college tournaments," Potter said. "She's powerful. She can overpower a golf course. She has all the tools that it takes."

Wanting to stick to her original commitment, Ekey attended Furman for two seasons. She noticed Alabama's improvement and finally opted to come on board.

"Mic was the coach that I wanted to have to begin with," Ekey said. "I really just feel like he can get me where I want to go with golf. I felt that was really important."

Sturm transferred from Furman two years ago, and offers experience to direct a squad where five of the eight golfers are underclassmen.

Potter expects a season's worth of competition for playing spots among Harter, Swedish sophomores Helena Bloomberg and Camilla Lennarth, experienced junior Laura Goodwin and sophomore Rhea Nair from the United Arab Emirates

"We have a lot of competition for spots, and that's going to drive everybody and make them better," Potter said.

"Everything is there for the taking," Ekey said. "We have a bunch of girls who have all the talent in the world. I think it's just a matter of putting it all together when we need to."

Sarah Sturm is only senior on Tide squad



University of Alabama

2008 Golf & Tennis Rosters

MEN'S GOLF

Name	Hgt.	Class	Hometown
Spencer Cole	5-11	Frosh	Bradenton, Fla.
Mark Harrell	5-11	Senior	Hazlehurst, Ga.
Thomas Huggins	6-1	Soph	Ponte Vedra, Fla.
Matt Hughes	6-1	Junior	Dalton, Ga.
Ben Moody	6-1	Senior	Tuscaloosa
Hunter Slatton	6-5	Frosh	Tuscaloosa
Matthew Swan	6-0	Junior	Montgomery
Joseph Sykora	5-9	Senior	Daphne
Michael Thompson	6-0	Senior	Tucson, Ariz.
Gator Todd	6-0	Senior	Florence
Phillip Weaver	6-0	Frosh	Tuscaloosa
Stewart Whitt	5-11	Senior	Athens

Head Coach: Jay Seawell

Assistant Coach: Scott Limbaugh

WOMEN'S GOLF

Name	Hgt.	Class	Hometown
Helena Blomberg	5-8	Soph	Uppsala, Sweden
Kathleen Ekey	5-7	Junior	Wadsworth, Ohio
Laura Goodwin	5-6	Junior	Birmingham
Courtney Harter	5-6	Frosh	Clearwater, Fla.
Camilla Lennarth	5-10	Frosh	Stockholm, Sweden
Rhea Nair	5-4	Soph	Dubai, UAE
Sarah Sturm	5-5	Senior	Spartanburg, S.C.
Kelley VanDenburg	5-6	Frosh	Brockport, N.Y.

Head Coach: Mic Potter

Assistant Coach: Susan Rosenstiel

MEN'S TENNIS

Name	Hgt.	Class	Hometown
Javier Bes	6-1	Senior	Zaragoza, Spain
Daniel Buikema	6-5	Junior	Battle Creek, Mich.
Andrew Felsenthal	5-11	Junior	Memphis
Michael Jung	5-11	Junior	Atlanta
Jordie Kindervater	6-2	Senior	St. John's, Newfoundland
Billy Mertz	5-11	Senior	Silver Spring, Md.
Saketh Myneni	6-4	Soph	Andhra Pradesh, India
Taylor Striplin	6-1	Senior	Birmingham
Sammy Struyf	6-0	Senior	Waregem, Belgium
Mathieu Thibaudeau	6-3	Junior	St. Georges, Quebec
Trey Walston	6-0	Frosh	Birmingham
Houssam Yassine	6-0	Soph	Rabat, Morocco

Head Coach: Billy Pate

Assistant Coach: Lee Nickell

WOMEN'S TENNIS

Name	Class	Hometown
Paige Bethmann	Soph	Dallas
Paulina Bigos	Soph	Chicago
Andrea Brenes	Senior	San Jose, Costa Rica
Meritt Emery	Frosh	Lexington, Ky.
Shelley Godwin	Junior	Enterprise
Caroline Kenney	Frosh	Tuscaloosa
Allison Nolen	Frosh	Birmingham
Bianca Svensson	Soph	Atlanta
Alice Tunaru	Soph	Piesti, Romania
Tiffany Welcher	Frosh	Claksville, Ind.
Elise Wettermark	Frosh	Mobile

Head Coach: Jenny Mainz

Assistant Coach: Eduardo Rincon

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More Early Additions

Rowing, track, swimming athletes signed

Most of the attention on early signees is on men's basketball. In November, the Crimson Tide squad of Coach Mark Gottfried added three high-profile players—forwards JaMychal Green and Tony Mitchell and guard Andrew Steele.

There were also signees announced in women's basketball, baseball, softball, gymnastics, volleyball, men's and women's golf, men's and women's tennis, and women's track and field.

Unlike football, which ordinarily completes its signings in one day on the first Wednesday in February, and men's basketball, which usually winds things up with full coverage in that early signing period in November, other sports have a tendency to have results drag in. Announcements cannot be made until all paperwork is received by The University and the athletes are accepted. Some sports elect to wait until all signees are on board before making any announcement.

Thus, we have additional Alabama signees in sports which reaped rewards in the early signing period. Here are updates on rowing, men's track and field, and swimming and diving:

ROWING

When Larry Davis started Alabama's newest sport just over a year ago, he said that his recruiting likely would include athletes who had not participated in rowing. That's because not many high schools—particularly in Alabama—have a rowing team. He expected to get some signees who had shown athletic ability in other sports.

But Davis' five signees from November 2007 all have a background in rowing.

Bianca Arrington of Fairfax, Virginia; Erika Baranek of Gloucester, Virginia; Kristen Iverson of Medford, New Jersey; Paige Storey of Chattanooga; and Allie Wetteland of Tallahassee are part of Alabama's second signing class and are slated to join the Crimson Tide for the 2008-09 season.

"I think all five of these ladies will be able to come in and make an immediate impact for us next season," Davis said. "They are all hard workers who have the drive to be successful at the



Bianca Arrington



Erika Baranek



Kristen Iverson

collegiate level. I am excited about their potential and what they will be able to bring to Crimson Tide rowing."

Arrington rows for Elliot Lane at Thompsons Boat Center in Washington, D.C. She also competes for Rob and Katie Waslaski at Robinson Secondary School where she was team captain as a junior and senior. She was part of the winning Junior A 8 boat at the 2007 U.S. Rowing Club National Championships and helped her boat to a third place finish in the Junior A 8 at the 2007 Royal Canadian Henley Regatta. She also earned first-team Washington Post All-Metro Athlete in 2007.

Baranek rows for William Foster and Gloucester High School and Tim Ulsaker at Mobjack Rowing Association in Mathews, Virginia. As a junior, Baranek was part of Gloucester's second place Junior 4+ boat, which also won the Virginia State Championship and the prestigious Stotesbury Cup. She also finished third as part of Mobjack's 4+ at the 2006 Royal Canadian Henley Regatta. She also competed in basketball, track and cross country in high school and is a member of the Beta and Latin Club.

Iverson rows for Joe Sullivan at both South Jersey Rowing Club and Shawnee High School. She led the Shawnee Novice 8 boat to an undefeated regular season as a sophomore. As a junior she helped the Varsity 8 qualify for the national championships. Iverson also swims for Shawnee, earning four varsity letters. A National Honor Society officer, she earned Magna Cum Laude honors in the National Latin Exam.

Storey is a coxswain for Allen Eubanks at South East Juniors and Megan Hanewald at the Baylor School. She helped lead Baylor to the Tennessee State Championship in 2007. She earned

Most Improved Rower in 2006. Storey also competed in cross country at Baylor.

Wetteland rows for Brett Tillotson at Leon High School. She helped lead Leon's Junior 8 boat to a third place finish at the SRA National Championships in 2007. She rowed as part of Leon's third place squad at the 2005 Head of the Hooch Regatta. She earned the Novice Hammer award as a freshman. Wetteland also competed in swimming and softball. She was vice president of the Key Club. A native of Tallahassee, Fla., she is the daughter of Elton and Sandy

MEN'S TRACK & FIELD

The early signing period works out very well for a spring sport, such as track and field. Even the indoor track and field season is primarily in the spring semester. Men's Coach Harvey Glance has signed three transfers who entered the University for the spring semester and are immediately eligible for both indoor and outdoor competition this year.

The additions are distance runner Tyson David, sprinter Antoine Fant, and sprinter Ray Judusingh.

David is a five-time Junior College National Champion and eight-time All-America from Central Arizona College. He won an individual cross country national title in 2006 and the 10,000 meter national titles in both the 2006 and 2007 outdoor season. He was also a member of two Junior College team track and field team championships in 2006 and 2007.

He has earned eight National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) All-American honors. In cross country he was All-America in 2006, winning the national title, and in 2007, finishing third. On the track, he earned six All-American honors in two seasons. He was the top 10K finisher, second place in the 1500 meter and third in the 5,000 meter in 2006 as a freshman. In his sophomore season he was equally impressive at the NJCAA national meet winning the 10k national title for the second consecutive year, finishing second in the 5,000m and third in the 1,500m.

"I truly believe this is one of our most important signees since I have been at Alabama," Glance said. "Tyson has great range from the 800m through the 10k, once we put him into our distance program we are going to reach an unbelievable level not only in the Southeastern Conference but on the national level as well."

"I am truly excited that Tyson committed to run at Alabama," Cross Country Coach Joe Walker said. "Anytime you can land a highly coveted recruit with so many options like Tyson this late in the season is a blessing. I am looking forward to him adding tremendous depth to our already strong distance program."

Fant comes to Bama from Wallace State Community College in Hanceville, where he earned five NJCAA All-America honors in the 110 meter hurdles (2007 outdoor), 4 x 400 relay team (indoor and outdoor 2007), 4 x 100 relay team (2007 outdoor) and 60 meter hurdles (indoor 2007)

His best time of 14.18 in the 110M hurdles is under the NCAA regional qualification mark of 14.30. His other best times are: 21.84 in the 200m, 7.58 in the 55m hurdles (indoor) and 8.08 in the 60m hurdles (indoor).

His time in the 55m hurdles was the 84th fastest time in the world last season.

"Antoine will be a great addition to this season's track team," Glance said. "He should help us out in the sprints and relays and he is already running at NCAA regional qualifying times."

Judusingh spent his freshman year at Ole Miss before transferring to Broward Community College last season.

He is no stranger to the Sam Bailey Track and Field Complex on the Alabama campus as he was winner of the 100 meter race last March at the Alabama Relays. At this year's Alabama Relays he will be running for the Tide.

Judusingh's personal best in the 100 meter is 10.42 and 21.10 in the 200 meter, both of which are NCAA regional qualifying marks. Also look for him to be a member of the Alabama Relay teams.

"Ray is another strong signee that will help us on the track this spring," Glance said. "He should come in as our top short distance sprinter."

SWIMMING & DIVING

Alabama Men's and Women's Swimming and Diving Coach Eric McIlquham added quality performers to both his teams in the early signing period.

Bama signed versatile performers in Suzanne Schwee of Ashburn, Virginia, and Joe Ziegler of Tallahassee.

Schwee is coached by John Flanagan at the famed Curl Burke Swim Club and by Jen House at Stone Bridge High School. She is a three-time state high school champion, winning two 100 butterfly titles and a 100 backstroke championship. She has also been runner-up at the state championships in the 100 backstroke and 200 individual medley.

She has earned All-America honors in three events and was named the Washington Post all-metro team in 2006 and 2007. A standout student, she is a member of the National Honor Society and earned USA Swimming's Scholastic Award as well as Potomac Valley Swimming Scholar and Dulles District All-America honors.

A U.S. Senior National Championship and U.S. Open qualifier, she set an age group national record as part of Curl Burke's 400 medley relay in 2007 on the way to winning the U.S. Junior National Title in that event.

Her mother was an NCAA champion in the 200 backstroke.

"Suzanne has the potential to come in and make an immediate impact for us, not only in individual events but as part of our relays as well," McIlquham said. "She is not only a great swimmer, but a strong student as well which certainly fits in with our goals for this program."

Ziegler is coached by Terry Maul at Area Tallahassee Aquatics Club and by Julie Quinn at Leon High School. The three-time Florida Swimming Age Group Swimmer of the Year is a member of the United States National Junior Team and was selected to compete at the 2008 Victorian Championships in Melbourne, Australia in January.

Ziegler, who has set over 30 ATAC team records, competed in Kihei, Hawaii as part the United State's Junior Pan Pacific Championships, taking silver as part of the U.S. 800m freestyle relay.

"Joe is a tremendous athlete who is only getting better and better," McIlquham said. "Competing for the U.S. National team gives him invaluable experience. He will step on campus knowing what it takes to compete at this level."

The Tallahassee Democrat's 2007 All Big Bend Swimmer of the Year, Ziegler has won seven Florida state titles and been named all-state the past three years. He was named Leon's MVP four years in a row, holds seven school records and earned All-America honors in four events as a senior.

Prep Prospects

Saban is main reason for choosing Tide

Alabama Football Coach Nick Saban is known as one of college football's best recruiting coaches. He signed excellent classes during his tenure at LSU including 2007 NFL draft first round picks JaMarcus Russell (number one overall), LaRon Landry (number six overall), Dwayne Bowe (number 23 overall) and Craig Davis (number 30 overall). The Tigers enjoyed the fruits of that labor in winning the 2007 national championship.

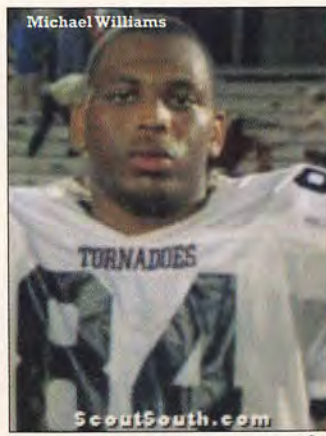
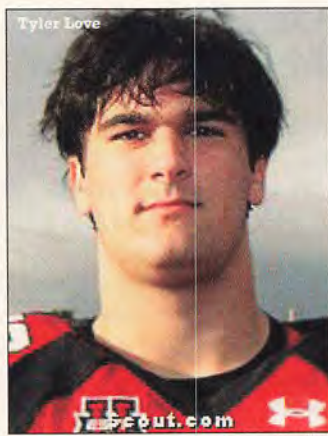
The Tide closed strong in 2007 when Saban was hired. He was given one month to keep commitments and also complete the recruiting year by landing uncommitted prospects. He did an excellent job.

The Saban staff has been recruiting at The University of Alabama for one full year, and the results are not surprising. The Tide started with a hot streak with in-state recruiting with 11 of the first 12 commitments from Alabama.

The coaching staff has been very selective with out-of-state recruiting and landed several top prospects on the recruiting board. A big surprise this year was landing three of the top five players from Tennessee, all rated four-star prospects by Scout Media: offensive tackle Barrett Jones (Cordova Evangelical Christian), tailback Chris Jordan (Brentwood Academy), and defensive end Don'ta Hightower (Lewisburg Marshall County).

Tyler Love (Mountain Brook), Scout five-star offensive tackle, grew up a big Tide fan. Alabama was the front-runner from the beginning, but the recruiting process became more interesting with coaches like Pete Carroll (USC), Mark Richt (Georgia) and Urban Meyer (Florida) wanting his signature.

Love made his commitment to Alabama in the spring and



was one of the biggest recruiters for his future home. He was named AHSAA Class 6A Lineman of the Year at the conclusion of the 2007 season.

"I think Coach Saban is a great recruiter because he does not sugar coat anything, which is important to a lot of the recruits," Love said. "Coach Saban talked about the current class. He told me how this class was very important for The University. He said this class has high integrity and character."

The early decision of Burton "B.J." Scott (Prichard Vigor), Scout four-star receiver, came as a surprise. Scott received scholarship offers from coast-to-coast, and it appeared Florida was the favorite to land his signature. Alabama was not on the recruiting radar for Scott until Nick Saban took over as the head coach.

Scott said he realized where he was needed after a few visits to Tuscaloosa and meeting with coach Saban.

"Coach Saban is a good guy," Scott said. "He is a good recruiter. I don't feel like I got recruited. I just weighed my options. It wasn't like there was something that he said to make me commit. I looked at my options. I am going to play for a team that needed me, not that wants me."

The first high school commitment for the class of 2008 was Michael Williams (Reform Pickens County), Scout four-star defensive end. Williams is a standout on both sides of the



ball, but he will begin his career in Tuscaloosa as a tight end.

The 6-6, 262-pound athlete grew up attending Alabama games at Bryant-Denny Stadium, and realized the program was heading in a new direction when Coach Saban arrived in Tuscaloosa.

Williams said, "He [Saban] said he was going to take over Alabama. He has done that. Once we get everything rolling Alabama will be back on top. We talked about my character as a person. Coach Saban said I was the type of person they want. He loves my ability. This is where I want to play."

Courtney Upshaw (Eufaula), Scout four-star defensive end, was a very big commitment for Alabama because of need at his future position, jack linebacker.

The 6-3, 227-pounder was named AHSAA Class 5A Lineman of the Year.

"To me, Coach Saban seems quiet," Upshaw said. "I know once we get on the field he will always be on you. I just always knew I wanted to go Alabama growing up."

Barrett Jones, another elite offensive tackle and finalist for Mr. Football in Tennessee, was considered an Alabama lean since the beginning of his recruitment. His father, Rex Jones, played basketball at Alabama. He received numerous scholarship offers and took several visits before announcing his decision to Alabama.

"I think Coach Saban is a great recruiter," Jones said. "He is great in one-on-one settings. In talking with him, I have especially noticed his passion for the game, his intensity, and his intelligence. He has a brilliant football mind, and you can really tell that he truly cares about his kids."

"After our conversation I thought to myself, 'That is the kind of coach I want to play for, and that is the kind of man I would never want to let down.' This is what makes him a great recruiter in my opinion."

Alabama has not had much success in recruiting the state of Louisiana in recent years, mainly due to Saban sealing the

borders when he was at LSU. Alabama did lure Luther Davis, a former LSU commitment and current Tide freshman defensive lineman, in 2007 after Saban was hired in Tuscaloosa.

Robby Green (River Ridge John Curtis), Scout four-star cornerback, is one of the top prospects in Louisiana and is a part of the Bama recruiting class of 2008.

"He's [Saban] a hands on guy," Green said. "He was always real with me. He specializes with defensive backs, and he has a close relationship with all of his players. He is surrounded by a great coaching staff. They stressed to me, my mom, and my dad that I will graduate while I'm there. He's the total package."

Undra Billingsley (Birmingham Woodlawn), Scout three-star defensive end, is an athletic two-way standout. Billingsley was one of the first commitments making his decision last March. He remained solid with his decision throughout the process and is expected to begin his career in Tuscaloosa as a defensive end.

"I think Coach Saban is marvelous," Billingsley said. "He is a great recruiter. He shows you there is going to be a family side and work-hard side. He is perfect."

Brandon Lewis (Pleasant Grove), Scout three-star defensive end, was another early commitment for Alabama. Lewis was selected All-Metro and participated in the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star game. His commitment to the Tide was an easy decision as he grew up an Alabama fan.

"Coach Saban is doing a great job with recruiting," Lewis said. "Obviously he is doing a great job, and we are going to have a great class. He said the first thing is getting an education and playing football is second. I think with our class, and the guys already there, we can win a national championship. I think we have the best class in the country. In a couple of years we are going to prove that to everyone."

The coaching staff didn't have to travel far to land the



Scout



Scout



Scout



Scout

commitment of John Michael Boswell (Tuscaloosa County), Scout three-star offensive tackle. The combination of Boswell, Love and Jones make Alabama's class one of the top offensive line classes in the country, especially at the tackle position.

Boswell graded out at over 95-per cent during his senior season, participated in the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star game and in the Under Armour All-America game in Orlando. The 6-6, 305-pound lineman gave his commitment to Alabama last April.

"I think Coach Saban is a great recruiter," Boswell said. "He talks about more than just football. He is down to business when he is on the field, but off the field he is a perfect good guy. He talks about everyday stuff. He makes you feel real comfortable. He wants to talk about your interests."

One of the biggest surprises of the class of 2008 recruiting season was the commitment of Melvin Ray (North Florida Christian in Tallahassee, Florida), Scout four-star wide receiver. Alabama was never mentioned as one of Ray's favorite schools until he camped in Tuscaloosa last summer. He committed shortly after the visit.

"Coach Saban is great," Ray said. "He has come down and talked to me and my family. He is very good at recruiting. He knows what he is talking about. He gets you pumped up. He knows all the great things to tell you. He doesn't beat around the bush. He tells you the truth."

Chris Jordan was a big pick-up for Alabama, and one of the Volunteer State's best at running back and linebacker. The 6-2, 210-pounder will start his career on the offensive side of the ball.

"Coach Saban did a fantastic job recruiting me," Jordan said. "I have not had a head coach call me as much as him or send me as many letters as he did. He kept in contact with me all of the time."

Alabama was in desperate need of signing a few

defensive linemen when they received a commitment from a monster of a man. Terrence Cody (Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College in Perkinston), Scout four-star defensive tackle, stands at 6-5, 400-pounds.

He has incredible quickness for his size and a lot of power. He will need to hit the weight room before his arrival in Tuscaloosa and said he was informed by the coaching staff to lose at least 30-pounds. He committed to Alabama in November and will graduate from junior college in May.

"Coach Saban is a real nice guy," Cody said. "He tells you what he likes about you. He tells you what is going on. He will be your friend, but sometimes someone you will hate. He gets the job done."

Alabama has already landed one of the top prospects in the country for the class of 2009 when D.J. Fluker (Foley), Scout four-star defensive tackle and National 100 member, committed to Alabama in November.

"The Alabama coaches want me as a defensive tackle," Fluker said. "I am currently 6-foot-7, 327-pounds. Right now I am neutral on if I want to lose any weight. It's not fat at all. I am wearing a size 22 shoe and moving very fast."

"I am 16 years old and will turn 17 in March. The doctors said I am not finished growing. They said I would be about seven feet tall. The speed I have for my size is pretty good. I run in the 4.9 range (4.9 seconds in the 40-yard dash). I am trying to improve my 40 time."

"Every time I go up to Alabama I just feel at home. I just love the feeling I get when I go up there. There is nothing that can change the feelings I have for Alabama. I really like being a part of something. It's real exciting for me."

Look for The University of Alabama to continue to finish with one of the top five classes in the country as long as one of the best in the nation, Coach Nick Saban, is out on the recruiting trail.

FOOTBALL HOT LIST

This year's Signing Day was February 6 and it is likely that Alabama's additions all came from this list. Those who had committed prior to January 6 are noted.

Name	Pos.	Hgt.	Wgt.	40	Hometown (High School)
Michael Abernathy	FB	5-11	235	4.5	Russellville
T.J. Barnes	OT	6-6	320	N/A	Enterprise
*Mark Barron	WR	6-2	205	4.5	Mobile (St. Paul's)
*Undra Billingsley	TE	6-3	245	N/A	Birmingham (Woodlawn)
*Devonta Bolton	WR	6-4	210	4.5	Norcross, Ga.
*John Michael Boswell	OL	6-5	290	N/A	Tuscaloosa (Tuscaloosa Co)
Deandre Brown	WR	6-6	225	4.5	Ocean Springs, Miss.
T.J. Bryant	CB	6-0	175	N/A	Tallahassee, Fla. (Lincoln)
*Terrance Cody	DT	6-5	385	N/A	Perkinston, Miss (Gulf Coast)
Marcel Dareus	DT	6-5	285	4.8	Birmingham (Huffman)
Aundre Dean	RB	6-1	210	4.5	Katy, Texas
Teavis Durgin	OT	6-6	295	N/A	Daphne
Marty Everett	DT	6-4	288	4.9	Bushnell, Fla. (South Sumter)
Robby Green	CB	6-0	180	4.4	River Ridge, La. (John Curtis)
William Green	DE	6-5	208	N/A	Birmingham (Spain Park)
Glenn Harbin	DE	6-5	230	N/A	Mobile (McGill-Toolen)
Jerrell Harris	LB	6-3	208	4.5	Gadsden (Gadsden City)
*Dont'a Hightower	LB/DE	6-2	245	4.7	Lewisburg, Tn. (Marshall Co.)
*Destin Hood	WR	6-2	182	4.5	Mobile (St. Paul's)
Mark Ingram	RB	5-10	202	4.5	Flint, Mich. (SW Academy)
*Chris Jackson	WR	6-1	190	4.5	McDonough, Ga. (Henry Co.)
*Star Jackson	QB	6-3	185	4.5	Lake Worth, Fla.
Toby Jackson	DE	6-4	240	N/A	Griffin, Ga.
*Barrett Jones	OT	6-5	270	N/A	Cordova, Tn. (Evnglcal Chrtn)
Julio Jones	WR	6-4	212	4.5	Foley
*Chris Jordan	RB	6-2	208	4.5	Brentw'd, Tn. (B'wood Acad.)
Anthony Landrum	RB	6-1	205	4.6	Sweet Water
Alonzo Lawrence	CB	6-0	180	4.5	Lucedale, Miss. (George Co.)
*Robert Lester	S	6-2	205	4.6	Foley
*Brandon Lewis	DE	6-3	260	N/A	Pleasant Grove
*Tyler Love	OL	6-7	270	N/A	Birmingham (Mtn Brook)
Chris Martin	DT	6-5	290	N/A	Ft Wltn Bch, Fla. (Ch'ct'wh'tee)
*Ivan Matchett	RB	5-10	205	4.6	Mobile (St. Paul's)
Antoine McClain	OT	6-6	313	N/A	Anniston
Greg McGrue	OT	6-8	350	5.4	Birmingham (Huffman)
Caleb Mitchell	CB	6-0	175	4.4	Russellville
Dekendrick Moncrief	WR	6-0	175	N/A	Prattville
*Kerry Murphy	DT	6-5	315	5.3	Hoover (Hargrave Acad.)
*Wesley Neighbors	S	6-2	195	4.55	Huntsville
Morgan Ogilvie	QB	6-1	185	4.7	Birmingham (Mtn Brook)
DeMario Phippen	RB	5-10	185	N/A	Tuscaloosa (Central)
*Jermaine Preyear	RB	5-11	195	N/A	Mobile (Davidson)
Robert Quinn	DE	6-4	255	4.7	No Chston, SV (Ft. Dorchester)
*Melvin Ray	WR	6-3	205	4.5	Tllhssee, Fla. (No. Fla. Chris.)
Justin Rogers	RB	5-11	180	4.5	Vestavia Hills
*Burton Scott	WR	5-10	190	4.4	Prichard (Vigor)
*Brad Smelley	WR	6-3	215	N/A	Tuscaloosa (American Chrtn)
*Corey Smith	K	6-0	190	N/A	Bnker Hill, WV (Musselman)
*Damian Square	DL	6-3	275	4.75	Houston, Texas (Yates)
Dallas Thomas	OT	6-5	252	5.27	Btn Rouge, La. (Scotlandville)
Jacoby Thomas	LB	N/A	N/A	N/A	Mobile (Murphy)
Zack Townley	CB	5-11	185	4.65	Winfield
*Courtney Upshaw	DE	6-2	225	N/A	Eufaula
Marsellos Wilder	WR	6-2	190	N/A	Tuscaloosa (Central)
Jeremy Williams	QB	6-0	200	N/A	Tuscaloosa (Central)
*Michael Williams	DE	6-6	240	4.7	Reform (Pickens County)
*Committed to Alabama					



Graham Harrell

Sam Greenwood/Getty



Ian Johnson

Otto Greule Jr/Getty



Arian Foster

Streeter Lecka/Getty



Chase Daniel

Ronald Martinez/Getty

A LOOK AHEAD

The evaluation process for the 2009 NFL Draft will get into full swing almost immediately after this year's draft is completed in April

by Tom Marino **scout.com**

As the National Football League moves to its second scouting season (the evaluation of the declared underclassmen), combine scouts representing the two principal scouting organizations within the NFL (National and Blesto) begin the most critical phase of their scouting process: the painstaking identification of draft-eligible seniors for the 2008 college football season and the 2009 player draft.

Although many of these upcoming seniors are already well known in both name and reputation to the majority of league scouts, virtually no NFL teams will even remotely concern themselves with these players until two to three weeks following the 2008 draft.

With elite players from the junior class like Arkansas running back **Darren McFadden**, Miami defensive stars **Calais Campbell** and **Kenny Phillips**, top receiving prospects **James Hardy** (Indiana), **Malcolm Kelly** (Oklahoma), **DeSean Jackson** (California) and **Earl Bennett** (Vanderbilt), Kansas cornerback **Aqib Talib**, and running backs **Jamaal Charles** (Texas), **Ray Rice** (Rutgers), **Steve Slayton** (West Virginia) and McFadden's Arkansas backfield mate **Felix Jones**, among the 52 juniors and one sophomore having declared themselves for this spring's draft, one can readily see the enormous task awaiting the combine scouts as they visit spring practice sessions and attend pro-day and spring timing dates throughout the country over the next four months.

Having been involved in the process of evaluating collegiate talent for virtually my entire adult life, I want to share with you a conversation I had with my scouting mentor, the late **Alex Bell**, during one of our many trips traversing the back roads of Western Pennsylvania in the pursuit of football talent. Alex was a wonderful man, who literally gave up a head coaching position at Villanova to become one of the original Blesto scouts.

"You know, Tom," he would say, "most of the owners and people at the top don't have the slightest idea how difficult and essential the job of being a personnel scout is to the lifeblood of a club. They expect you to visit five schools in any given week and accurately evaluate anywhere from 20 to 35 players, based on a single practice and film of questionable quality, viewing their (coaches') drills, being run simultaneously with those of other senior prospects. Very often these universities only allow you to view a handful of four-minute practice periods. Based on that information, clubs will draft these recommended players, observe them in multiple mini-camps, rookie orientation, six weeks of training camps performing the drills they want to see, film every practice session, review them every evening at their position meetings, watch them perform in pre-season games, literally tuck them into bed at night (bed check), and after all of that they are still often unsure of their skill level and athletic potential."

He'd often conclude that particular story by stating that with that kind of exposure, I'd probably never be wrong on an individual player again! Truer words have probably never been spoken on this subject, but that being said, let's now become instant evaluators and take a look at some of the players who might well impact the game of professional football in the not-too-distant future.

It all starts at the quarterback position; if you don't have one, your chances of successfully competing in the NFL are virtually non-existent. The projected 2009 quarterback draft class does not appear to be a very deep position, but I'm certain that most teams are hopeful one or more of the borderline prospects can make a giant leap and develop in his senior season. Purdue's **Curtis Pointer** appears at this stage to hold a slight edge over the rest of the field which includes California's **Nate Longshore** (very disappointing junior season), New Mexico's **Chase** "Is it real or is it Memorex" **Holbrook**, Missouri's acutely undersized



Patrick White



Marlon Lucky



Dicky Lyons



Derrick Williams

Stephen Dunn/Getty

Stephen Dunn/Getty

Andy Lyons/Getty

Scott Halleran/Getty

record-setting passer **Chase Daniel**, Louisville backup **Hunter Cantwell**, and Texas Tech's **Graham Harrell**. All have put up some very impressive numbers, but the question which must be answered is: do these quarterbacks have the skills to function in a diversified professional offense, or are many of them just products of gimmick, high-percentage offensive systems?

Looking for a sleeper at the quarterback position? I particularly liked the skills that off-injured UCLA quarterback **Ben Olsen** displayed as a freshman while attending BYU, but he has yet to show those same skills since returning from his LDS mission and transferring to the Bruins. **Rhett Bomar** of Sam Houston State also impressed me with his throwing ability, poise and mobility as a freshman at Oklahoma. If he is able to successfully recover from a late-season knee injury, he has, in my opinion, the necessary skills to leap-frog over most if not all of the quarterbacks currently ranked ahead of him.

Chase Clement of Rice looked very impressive in his late-season effort over Tulane (my only exposure). He was deadly accurate, threw on time and showed excellent mobility and awareness. The one issue I have is that, like his namesake Chase Daniel, he appeared rather slight and undersized physically. Three seasons ago, I wouldn't have given West Virginia's **Pat White** any chance of developing into a bonafide NFL quarterback prospect, but over the past two seasons he has improved greatly as both a passer and decision-maker. He is poised, confident and smooth as silk, throws well on the move and is, without question, the most capable in this group of making things happen with his legs.

No position was hit harder by junior defections than running back; excellent news for the '08 draft, but not so good for next season's class. **McFadden**, **Jones**, **Rice**, **Slaton**, **Charles**, **Jonathan Stewart**, **Rashard Mendenhall**, **James Davis** and **Kevin Smith** (all juniors) and East Carolina senior **Chris Johnson** are universally considered the top running backs in the upcoming player draft.

Of the remaining backs who chose to return for their senior season, **Arian Foster** from Tennessee shows excellent vision, balance, and inside run skills. I didn't see much in the way of top-end speed, but he did show the ability to bounce things outside effectively when he sees things develop, and to finish. **Marlon Lucky** (Nebraska) has better speed than Foster, and showed solid running and catching skills in his junior campaign. **Ian Johnson** of Boise State is a good but not exceptional back, in my opinion. I particularly liked his run toughness and willingness to hit it up inside. Ohio State backup **Maurice "I'm the other" Wells** appears to possess good speed and inside run toughness. He

is an unselfish player who prepares himself well (the attributes of a good professional). Few prep backs in recent years have exhibited the speed and skills of Florida State's **Antone Smith** (exceptional get-off quickness and instincts), but due to injuries and an inferior (by FSU standards) offensive front, he has not been near the player many expected. Let me give you a scouting truism: at 5-8 and under 200 pounds, Antone is in every sense of the word a little guy, and little guys just don't hold up physically at the professional level. Michigan's **Javon Ringer** has speed and can do a lot of things that contribute to winning football games. As a full-time player in 2008, he very well could separate himself from the rest of the pack.

Texas A&M's **Jorvorskie Lane** is an excellent red-zone runner and probably the class of the fullback group, but with many modern offenses today de-emphasizing the use of a pure fullback, don't look for Lane to move to the top of many draft boards.

Wide receivers **Brian Robiskie** (how fast is he?) from Ohio State, Penn State's **Derrick Williams**, Florida State's **Greg Carr**, Arizona's **Mike Thomas** and **Demetrius Byrd** of LSU appear to be the class of another severely depleted position. Cal Poly's **Ramses Barden**, **Jaison Williams** of Oregon, **Aaron Kelly** of Clemson and USC's **Patrick Turner** all have size, firm hands, impressive physical dexterity and create match-up problems for defenders in the red zone, but none appear to have the racehorse-type speed that most pro clubs value.

Kentucky's **Dicky Lyons** is one receiver who really bears watching. He has a very limited football background (just two seasons as a prep player), but has far better speed and vertical acceleration than I originally felt he possessed (I have never seen him run down in the open field). The son of a former Kentucky All-SEC and pro player with the New Orleans Saints, Lyons is smart, versatile and a confident, dependable receiver who has also proven to be a top special teams player. Hey, he may never be your No. 1 bell-cow receiver at the professional level, but he will contribute to winning a whole lot of football games for somebody.

In recent times it has become increasingly difficult to find what coaches term "the complete tight end". Many of today's star tight ends in the NFL are accomplished receivers, aligning in the slot or put in motion, but few are either willing or able to do all of the necessary things within the running game. In keeping with this trend, many of next season's group of top-level tight ends are impressive from an athletic standpoint, but appear to lack the strength, power and point toughness to factor within the running game.



Ryan Purvis

Al Messerschmidt/Getty



Cornelius Ingram

Sam Greenwood/Getty



Duke Robinson

Ronald Martinez/Getty



Herman Johnson

Chris Graythan/Getty

Wisconsin's **Travis Buckum**, a former defensive end, is the prototype receiving tight end of the new millennium. At 6-4, 225 pounds and sporting impressive ball skills, he has the size to mismatch most inside and sub-package defenders. I really liked the way he was able to catch balls confidently outside of his frame and advance up the field.

Chase Coffman (Missouri) is another receiver-first prospect; his 2007 season was slowed due to a lingering ankle injury that subsequently required postseason surgery. Look for him, when fully recovered, as the team's primary receiving option, to put up some crazy numbers in 2008. Coffman needs to get stronger, but I believe he has a real chance to factor quickly at the pro level.

Boston College's **Ryan Purvis** may well be the best combination tight end in the group. I consider him an adequate performer at the point of attack who catches the football in the under zones well. On the negative side of the ledger, I really don't see him as an up-the-seam threat, nor did he show much in the way of run instincts when advancing the football.

After catching eight passes for three TDs in the season opener vs. in-state rival Colorado, **Kory Sperry** of Colorado State was injured (torn ACL in his left knee) in game two and was lost for the season. If he can recover physically, I see no reason he couldn't become a major factor at the TE position next season and beyond. The **Hill** boys, Ball State's **Darius** and N.C. State's injured redshirt **Anthony**, are two pro-sized tight end prospects who are sure to get some attention in '08.

After first announcing he would forego his senior season, Florida hybrid **Cornelius Ingram** rescinded his declaration and will return for his senior campaign. In Ingram, I saw a player with very good dexterity, hands and athletic ability, but like many of the previously discussed tight ends, I have not seen enough of him in-line to form an opinion as to his chances of factoring within the running game.

I was mildly surprised with the NFL decision makers second-to third-round draft projection for California's All-America center, **Alex Mack**, but I'm also well aware of the conservative nature of the NFL evaluators. Mack is a polished player and, most important, a consistent knee-bender. He is a smart blocker, can make front adjustments and was very effective in pass protection. Barring injury, I see no reason for him not to have a long, productive professional career. Arkansas' **Jonathan Luigs** is widely considered the nation's No. 2 pivot prospect. I really liked his quickness, but also felt he had some problems with odd looks and big people. I was also impressed with his ability to

consistently reach the play-side tackle. I don't see him as ever becoming a great one, but he has more than enough skills to factor at the position.

Oklahoma's massive guard **Duke Robinson** is a very physical, aggressive player, with surprising quickness for a big man. I liked the way he was able to climb defenders and get movement in-line. In pass protection, I also liked his short set and extend-ability...a big dancing bear. On the negative side, I felt he showed some inconsistency blocking in space, and at times he got sloppy with his hands (letting them get outside the defender's frame). Oregon State guard **Jeremy Perry** did some impressive things as a sophomore, but his 2007 season was seriously derailed when he was injured in the season opener. He's aggressive, has good rear power, gets good fit and showed the ability to hit on the rise (roll his hips). On the negative side, he appeared to be a tad shorter than I had originally thought. Ohio State's **Steve Rehling** is another wide body who showed some impressive physical skills. He will undoubtedly play at the professional level, but I truly believe he is better suited to play out at the right tackle spot.

Colleges around the country annually provide a steady supply of quality interior linemen, but at this early stage I see no other individuals on the horizon at the offensive guard position who I view as either a high draft selection or a lock to play.

When evaluating offensive tackles, I often think back to a quote from the late **George Young**, one of the best evaluators of talent in the game. "Top skill-position athletes should be able to make an immediate impact at the professional level, but you have to be patient and wait on these big Clydesdales to develop."

It's early, but I believe the quality at the top of the offensive tackle position for the 2009 draft is as talented as it has been in some time, but in keeping with Young's words, their impact may not be felt quickly. LSU giant **Herman Johnson** is an athletic big man, but still needs a great deal of work with his kick/slide (depth and width) for the left tackle spot. I also felt he had problems with inside counters and defenders crossing his face. When he did get those big paws on people, the game was more often than not over. **Phil Loadholt**, a giant JC transfer (Garden City), was extremely impressive in his first season at left tackle for Oklahoma. He showed impressive in-line power and the ability to finish people. In pass protection, he will need some work on his pass sets and angles, but he sure has a lot of positive physical attributes. Ohio State's **Alex Boone** is another giant, and will begin his third season as a starter



Brian Orakpo

Ronald Martinez/Getty



Rey Mauluga

Jeff Golden/Getty



James Laurinaitis

David Maxwell/Getty



Michael Hamlin

Grant Halverson/Getty

for the Buckeyes. Solid in every area, he has a real chance to factor quickly in the pay-for-play ranks. **Gene "The Blocking Machine" Monroe** was quite possibly the most highly recruited interior lineman in the country as a prep player. Although his early progress at Virginia was somewhat slower than UVA had hoped, he really impressed me with his play during the 2007 season. Oregon prospect **Max Unger**, at 6-5, 295 pounds, is certainly the runt of the litter, but based on my exposure he may well be the most game-ready player of the group. I loved his intensity, feet, power and use of hands.

Moving to the defensive side of the ball, Texas defensive end **Brian Orakpo** is an undersized player with a great deal of athletic talent and potential. At this juncture he looks like a perfect fit as an outside rusher in a 3-4 look. LSU's pass-rusher extraordinaire **Tyson Jackson** has a ton of natural ability and the skills to become an early factor in the pros. Ohio State's **Lawrence Wilson** was poised to have a huge season for the Buckeyes before suffering a broken leg in the 2007 season opener. Georgia Tech's **Michael Johnson** and Wisconsin's **Matt Shaughnessy** play extremely hard, are talented and in my opinion, are nowhere near their full potential. **Jeremy Geathers** (the son of Saints' top draft selection **Jumpy Geathers**) is undersized, but has a real chance of factoring as a nickel rusher.

Georgia's **Jeff Owens**, USC's **Fili Moala**, Tennessee's **Demonte Bolden** and **Roy Miller** of Texas are all very talented inside linemen who all should move up to the professional level, but the prize of this group may well be an individual who has yet to play a single down of collegiate football. His name is **Callahan Bright**, and after signing with Florida State in February of 2005, embarked on a three-year odyssey that took him from prep school to JC and finally, in the summer of 2007, to little Shaw University in Raleigh, NC. Ruled ineligible just prior to the start of the season, Callahan spent the entire season wreaking havoc on Shaw's offense as a member of the defensive scout team. Midway through the season, in order to be able to run their offense, the coaches were forced to move Callahan to the "mike backer" position. Said one veteran coach: "I've played with, against, and coached some awfully good football players over the years, and this one (Bright) is equal or better than any of them. He only knows one speed, and is not happy unless somebody out there is bleeding."

The inside linebacker position is ably manned by Ohio State's **James Laurinaitis**, the latest in a long line of outstanding Buckeye inside backers. Not far behind is USC

run-stopper **Rey Mauluga**. Both should make a quick impact, and they have the potential to become every-down performers. Little-known Maryland first-year regular **Dave Philistin** just flies around and makes plays.

If there is a better outside backer in the country than Penn State's **Sean Lee**, he should be illegal. The latest in a seemingly endless line of top Nittany Lion backers has outstanding speed, top playing instincts, athletic ability and a great desire to get to the football. After playing defensive in 2006, USC's **Brian Cushing** returned to his natural "sam backer" position in '07, and although he did not have a particularly productive season, I believe he is poised to have a big senior season. The way I see it, you just can't have enough big, fast people on your football team.

A talent scout wouldn't have to journey outside the state of Ohio to find four of the finest corners in the country. **Malcolm Jenkins** of Ohio State has every quality one looks for at the cornerback position. Cincinnati's **Mike Mickens** is somewhat slight and doesn't have racehorse speed, but I love his quickness and reactions in coverage. Teammate **DeAngelo Smith** is a late bloomer who, in his first season as a starter, showed that he was a consistent playmaker. The fourth member of this Ohio connection, **Mark Parson** from Ohio University, is an undersized but highly competitive player with a great burst. **Victor Harris** from Virginia Tech, **Tony Carter** from Florida State, Central Florida's **Joe Burnett**, and Miami's **Randy Phillips** are four others who have professional skills.

With the defection of Miami's **Kenny Phillips** to the pros, the top tier of college safeties took a major hit, but fear not, there are a number of exciting and talented players vying to fill the void. Among them is Oklahoma's **Nic Harris**, a big, intimidating run-stopper. Staying within the Big 12, **William "Willy Mo" Moore** of Missouri is another top prospect with impressive size and speed. Clemson's **Michael Hamlin** gave serious consideration to foregoing his final season, but hopes a solid 2008 season will propel him into a top-round position. **Anthony Riddick** of Miami had "big-time player" written all over him in 2004 as a true freshman starter with the Hurricanes, but after missing two of the past three seasons with serious knee injuries, his playing future is very much in doubt. To what extent he can return from these potentially career-ending injuries is still anyone's guess, but I saw too much ability to give up on him just yet.

Not satisfied with these top senior prospects for the 2009 player draft? Not to worry, more top underclassmen are just a simple declaration away.

Where Are They Now?

Jim Bunch has football stories to share

People ask him for a wake-up call. They ask him for few extra towels. If they find out he was an All-America player under legendary Coach Paul W. Bryant at The University of Alabama, they ask Jim Bunch about football.

Bunch, a star lineman for the Tide from 1976 to 1979, has owned and operated Winston Place, a traditional, Old South-style bed-and-breakfast located in Valley Head, for the last 13 years.

"The most enjoyable thing about what I do is meeting people from all walks of life," the 51-year-old Bunch said. "One guy I met was involved in the development of the Hubble telescope. The funny thing was that all he and the rest of his group wanted to talk about was Alabama football."

And, much to the guests' delight, Bunch always has plenty of old gridiron stories to share. He played during a golden era of Alabama football when the Tide posted a 43-5 record, won two national championships, three SEC championships and two Sugar Bowls. It was a time when Alabama dominated opponents with its nearly unstoppable wishbone offense, and leading the way in that attack was Bunch, a three-time All-SEC selection, The Football News' sophomore offensive lineman of the year in 1977, and a consensus All-America selection in 1979. Although small by today's standards at 6-foot-1, 240 pounds, Bunch blasted open holes for the likes of Jeff Rutledge, Steadman Shealy, Johnny Davis, Tony Nathan and Major Ogilvie.

"It was more like playing defense on offense," Bunch said of the wishbone. "It was an attack-style offense. You came off the ball extremely low, almost a leap-like explosion. You were only about a foot-and-a-half off the ground. It was kind of like we were mules. Defensive linemen and linebackers hated it because it was impossible to defend, and I think you could still run that type of offense today and be successful. It's not conducive to the pros (and, by extension, recruiting), but it's still a good offense."

So effective in that offense was Bunch that he was named to Alabama's Team of the Decade for the 1970s. Yet Bunch believes that honor as well as all the other honors he's received for his play at Alabama really should be spread around to others.

"It wasn't me," he said. "It was the coaches and the other players. I was able to start for four years, so when they decided on the All-America team, they gave it to someone they remembered being out there the most, but the honors

could have gone to any of us five on the offensive line. In fact, one of the best on that line was Vince Boothe, who, I believe, never got the recognition he deserved."

But lack of personal recognition was kind of the Alabama way back then. And so was winning, and winning big.

"The most incredible thing about those teams was how unselfish everyone was in working towards one goal," Bunch said. "Then there was the perfection Coach Bryant demanded from everyone, and not just from the players but from the assistant coaches, too. In fact, I think the assistant coaches might have been more in awe of him than a lot of the players, and I say that because I got to spend one year on his staff as a graduate assistant. I remember feeling like I was sitting at the round table with King Arthur. He just saw things other people didn't see."

The days of playing for Coach Bryant and sitting in his coaches' meetings are long gone now for Bunch, but that doesn't mean Bryant's influence on him has waned.

"The thing about Coach Bryant is he never leaves you," Bunch said. "I even have dreams about him from time to time. He was able to take guys like me and make us believe we could play, and he taught us to be humble. We only had one superstar on our team back then, and that was Coach Bryant."

Bunch remembers how prior to team meetings, players would sit around the projector room talking. And then...

"When Coach Bryant walked in, you could hear your heart beat and you could hear the heart beat of the guy next to you," Bunch said. "Everybody got so quiet to hear what he would say."

Players knew if they listened to what their coach said, things would come out right on Saturday.

"He was a master at getting us ready Monday through Friday," Bunch said. "He didn't leave anything to chance."

They also knew to trust him when he decided to move a player to a new position. Bunch experienced that first-hand his freshman season when, just prior to the huge annual clash with rival Tennessee, Bryant switched Bunch from left guard to right tackle.

"I remember him telling me, 'This may be the biggest mistake of my coaching career,'" Bunch said. Obviously, it wasn't. Alabama beat Tennessee, 20-13, and Bunch went on to his All-SEC and All-America career.

Bryant even weighed in on his players' decision to marry. Bunch still recalls an episode where two of his teammates

wanted to get married, and they decided to go together to ask permission from Bryant. Bryant okayed one of them; the other he told to wait another year.

"Can you imagine having to go back to your fiancée and telling her you all couldn't get married because Coach Bryant said you had to wait another year?" said Bunch, who, incidentally, was one player Bryant did allow to marry while at Alabama. "Coach Bryant's take on marriage was that for some players it helps, for some players it hurts."

Bryant also liked to challenge his players' thought processes when it came to playing two sports. One of Bunch's teammates, Marty Lyons, was also a standout pitcher and petitioned Bryant to let him play baseball in the spring.

"Coach Bryant looked at him and said, 'Nothing against baseball, but I'd perfect one sport before I started trying to play two,'" Bunch said. "In other words, he let Lyons know that Lyons still had areas in football he needed to improve on, and that message got through to him."

It's strange to imagine now, but Bunch almost didn't play for the man with the houndstooth hat. Growing up in Mechanicsville, Virginia, Bunch was so lightly recruited that he ended up going to Fork Union Prep School to play football. After one year there, he planned to go to North Carolina State to play for Coach Lou Holtz, who had told Bunch he planned on staying in Raleigh until he retired. Then Holtz bolted for the New York Jets of the NFL. Bunch's path to Alabama opened up when Assistant Coach Ken Donahue, while scouting another player at a Fork Union game, unexpectedly found himself impressed with Bunch. Alabama offered and Bunch accepted.

And the rest, as they say, is history. But Bunch's Cinderella story on the gridiron came to an unexpected end following his senior year at Alabama in 1979. He thought he had showed enough to earn an opportunity to play at the professional level, especially after being named a consensus All-America. He never got drafted. He didn't even receive a free-agent offer.

"At the time, I was kind of bitter," Bunch said. "I was projected to be a fourth-round selection."

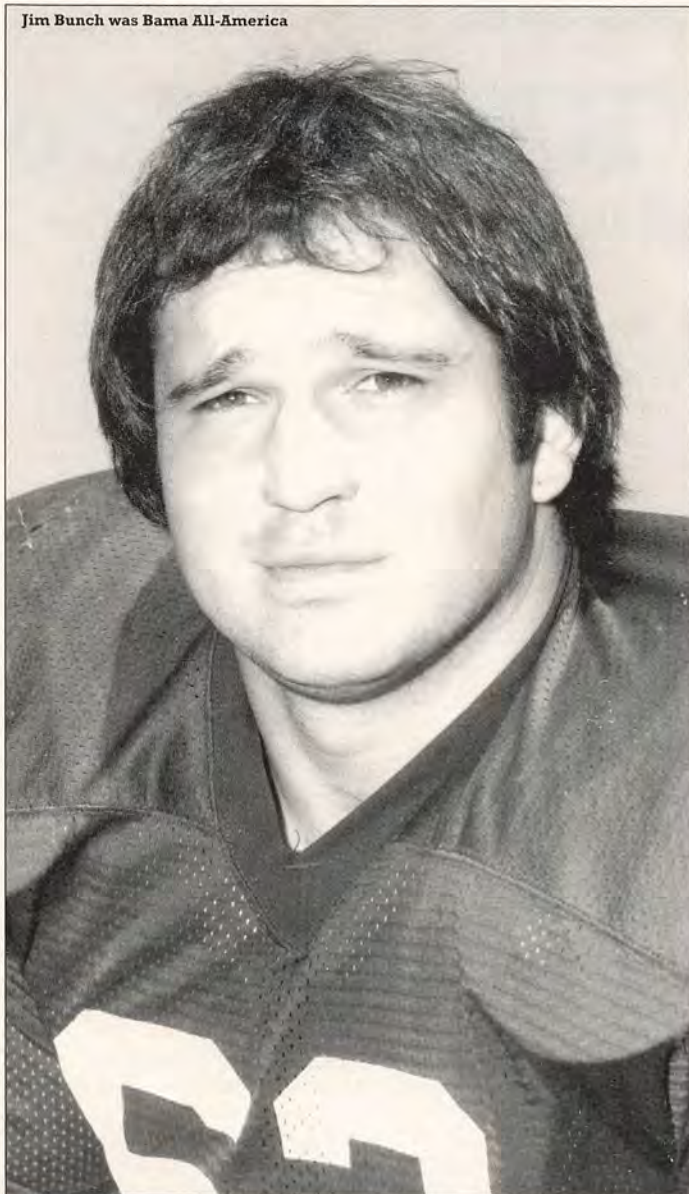
He had worked at Quincy's Steakhouse during his college days and decided to go into the restaurant consulting business full-time. He did some work for Quincy's, some for Hardee's. Then came the opportunity with Winston Place. Built in 1831, Winston Place was bought by his wife, Leslie's, grandfather in 1944 and used as a boarding house. It became a bed-and-breakfast in the early 1970s.

"It's like having an extended family," Bunch said of the operation. "We've had some of the same folks come back for 13 years now. We really do get a lot of repeat business."

Winston Place also makes for a perfect location for hosting reunions with former Alabama teammates.

Another perk of running Winston Place? No more being on the road and moving around all the time, as he was forced to do while serving as a restaurant consultant. That means more time with the family and more time ... in the gym. Yeah, the gym. His son, J.E.B., is in his senior year at Fort Payne High

Jim Bunch was Bama All-America



University of Alabama

School and heavily involved in track, which requires spending lots of time in the gym. In his efforts to be a fully supportive and helpful dad, Bunch finds himself in the gym working out right alongside J.E.B.

The father-son tandem works out four days a week.

"Do you have any idea what that does to a 51-year-old body?" Bunch asked jokingly "I'll just say that lifting weights with an 18-year-old is quite an experience."

J.E.B., nicknamed The Governor after once being misidentified in a newspaper as Jeb Bush, also plays football and is considering walking on at Alabama as a linebacker/fullback. Bunch also has a daughter, Kelly, who is a second-year law student at Syracuse, while Leslie stays busy as a sixth-grade school teacher.

Jim Bunch may consider that he has been in the right place at the right time on several occasions. For Alabama football, it was good that those times included his time on the Crimson Tide offensive line. ■

'BAMA Scorecard

Notebooking Crimson Tide Sports

A-DAY

Last year Alabama had some 92,000 for its spring football game at Bryant-Denny Stadium. No one questions that was the most ever to witness a college football team's spring game.

No one could have guessed last year's attendance, and there is no way to know what it will be this year in Coach Nick Saban's second year. What is known is this year's A-Day Game will be on Saturday, April 12, a week earlier than originally planned.

Spring training was expected to begin March 24 and conclude with the A-Day Game on April 19. Tuscaloosa secured a pre-Olympic triathlon event that had to be conducted the afternoon of April 19. The event will involve closing many streets around campus and use of area law enforcement officers. That would present obvious logistical problems for the city with a huge football crowd arriving.

Saban graciously moved the spring game from that date, even though it is not going to be convenient for the Crimson Tide.

There will not be enough days between a March 24 start and an April 12 A-Day to get in all the practice days. The University's spring break is March 15-23. Therefore, spring practice will either have to begin before the break and be interrupted or continue beyond the April 12 spring game. There is precedent for both at Bama.

Complete details of spring practice were to be announced later.

STAFF CHANGES

It is the nature of successful football programs that staff members have the opportunity to take new jobs, usually at improved salaries with more grandiose titles. Thus, it should not be a surprise when an assistant coach leaves Alabama. It has been that way for many, many years.

In January, Alabama lost two coaches, both of whom had coordinator titles at Alabama and who were given title upgrades in their new positions.

First, Ron Middleton, Alabama's tight ends coach and special teams coordinator, went to Duke as associate head coach. Then Major Applewhite, quarterbacks coach and offensive coordinator at Bama, went to Texas to be running backs coach and assistant head coach.

Both had previous ties.

For Middleton, it was being reunited with David Cutcliffe, the Alabama graduate who went from Tennessee offensive coordinator to head coach at Duke. Middleton had coached under Cutcliffe when Cutcliffe was head coach at Ole Miss.

For Applewhite, it was the opportunity to return to his alma mater, where he had been very, very successful as a quarterback.

As of our deadline, Alabama Head Coach Nick Saban had not announced replacements, though there had been numerous reports that Bobby Williams would join the staff.

Williams was an assistant under Saban before replacing Saban at Michigan State. He then coached under Saban at LSU and with the Miami Dolphins.

Regarding the departure of Middleton, Saban said, "Ron did a great job for us this season and I appreciate all of his hard work and dedication. We talked about it at length and this was a move he thought was best for both his career, in terms of the role as associate head coach, and most importantly his family. We'll miss them, but at the same time we support Ron and his family 100 per cent in this decision and wish them nothing but the best."

Middleton had been with Bama one year.

Middleton had previously coached under Cutcliffe at

Mississippi. "Ron Middleton is one of the best on the field coaches I've ever seen," Cutcliffe said.

Middleton played at Auburn and 10 years in the National Football League. He had also been an assistant coach in the NFL at Tampa Bay.

As Alabama's special teams coordinator last season, Middleton was in charge of placekicker Leigh Tiffin, who totaled 111 points, second-highest in Alabama history with a school record 25 field goals. He also coached return specialist Javier Arenas, who ranked in the top ten in the SEC in both punt and kickoff returns. Middleton also coached tight ends and Nick Walker had 23 receptions for 204 yards and two touchdowns.

Regarding the loss of Applewhite, Saban said, "Although we are sorry to see Major go, we wish him the best at Texas. He's a fine young coach and he did a great job for us.

"It's always special to go back to your alma mater, especially a place with as much tradition and history as Texas. Major was a big part of that during his playing days there and will again be a part of it moving forward as a coach. We appreciate all of his hard work and dedication during his time at Alabama."

Applewhite called his decision to leave Alabama "extremely difficult." He said that Saban asked Applewhite to stay at Bama.

"It's tough to leave a great place like Alabama, especially when it's a dream to be there," Applewhite said. "But the opportunity to come home is one that you can't pass up."

After starring as a quarterback for the Longhorns, Applewhite was a graduate assistant at his alma mater for two years. He was later at Syracuse and had a record-setting year as offensive coordinator at Rice before joining Saban at Alabama last year.

There was also a report that Alabama Defensive Coordinator Kevin Steele interviewed for the job of head coach at South Alabama, which intends to begin a football program. Other reports said Steele was just one of several men that South Alabama Athletics Director Joe Gottfried was using as a consultant in his search.

Following the loss of Applewhite, Saban said, "We will use this opportunity to find the best available candidate and improve our staff in the process."

BASEBALL CHANGES

Even before Alabama could begin baseball practice on February 1 or play its opening game on February 22, Crimson Tide Head Coach Jim Wells had news of Bama baseball.

He announced that Assistant Coach B.J. Green had been placed on administrative leave due to health reasons and that Volunteer Coach Dax Norris has been named interim assistant coach.

Norris was to continue to work with the Tide hitters and catchers and assist Wells with the pitching staff. Assistant Coach Mitch Gaspard, who serves as the recruiting coordinator, was to work with the hitters, infielders and outfielders this spring.

Wells said that Drew French had been added to the staff as the volunteer coach.

Wells also announced three roster changes for the spring semester. Junior infielder Cole Shelton, junior left-hand pitcher Jason Garner and sophomore outfielder Bryant Jones did not return to team for the spring semester. The Tide also added walk-on catcher David Woods, a transfer from Meridian (Mississippi) Community College, to its 2008 roster.

ALL-AMERICA

Alabama football fans don't always agree with what is written about the Crimson Tide. But it's safe to say that Bama fans would

agree with the Football Writers Association of America for the organization's selection of Alabama linebacker Rolando McClain as a 2007 Freshman All-America.

McClain, a native of Decatur, started in nine of Alabama's 13 games in his initial collegiate season. On September 1, in Alabama's 52-6 win over Western Carolina, he became the first true freshman since Saleem Rasheed in 1999 to start the season-opener at the linebacker spot.

A 2007 Coaches Freshmen All-Southeastern Conference selection, McClain finished the season with 75 tackles, good for fourth-best on the team. He added five tackles for loss, one sack, four pass breakups and two interceptions.

McClain had 15 tackles in the regular-season finale at Auburn and picked off a pass in the second quarter, the first interception of his career. Against Colorado in the PetroSun Independence Bowl, McClain tallied five tackles and picked off another pass on the Buffaloes' first play from scrimmage despite playing with a fractured thumb.

For his efforts in the class room, McClain earned the team's Academic Excellence Award at the team awards banquet in early December.

NUMBER ONE

The Alabama gymnastics team of Coach Sarah Patterson will be among the favorites to win the national championship this year. The Crimson Tide was ranked sixth in the pre-season poll.

No one will say that Alabama didn't prepare well for the NCAA Championship meet in Athens, Georgia, April 24-26. In all probability, Alabama will have seen all the participants during regular season competition.

Alabama's tough schedule was ranked most difficult in the nation.

Bama was to face four teams ranked in the nation's top five and 12 of the nation's top 25 as ranked in the pre-season coaches' poll.

Alabama's schedule includes pre-season number one Georgia, number two Florida, number four UCLA, number five Stanford, number seven Nebraska, number 10 LSU, number 13 Penn State, number 14 Arkansas, number 19 Auburn, number 23 Illinois, and number 24 Kentucky

"It's not a schedule that's designed to go undefeated," Patterson said. "It's a schedule that's designed to make us physically and mentally strong."

STRONG START

The Alabama gymnastics team got its 2008 season off to a good start hosting Illinois. Bama's score of 196.300 was the second highest opening score in Crimson Tide history. The Tide defeated Illinois, which scored 192.775.

This is Sarah Patterson's 30th year as Bama's head coach. She has a record of 29-1 in season-opening meets.

SOCCER ASSISTANTS

New Alabama Soccer Coach Todd Bramble brought his top assistant with him from Clemson and also added an assistant from Miami to complete the Crimson Tide staff.

From Clemson, Bramble added Tatum Clowney. Matt Hawkey was picked from Miami.

Clowney, who also was an assistant coach at Charleston Southern University (2004-05) in Charlotte, North Carolina, and at Converse College (2003) in Spartanburg, South Carolina, continues a long association with Bramble that dates to her playing days at Clemson. Clowney just completed her second season as a full-time assistant to Bramble at Clemson. She was a volunteer assistant for Bramble and the Tigers in 2006 and was promoted to a full-time position for the 2007 season. Clowney played for the Tigers from 1998 through 2001, when Bramble was an assistant coach (though 1998) and head coach of the Tigers her last three seasons of action (1999-2001).

Clowney has enjoyed a high level of success as both player and a coach. She was a member of the Clemson team from 1998-2001, a period during which the Lady Tigers had some of their most successful seasons, advancing to the NCAA Sweet 16 all four years,

reaching the Elite Eight twice (1999 and 2000) and winning the only ACC regular season title in program history in 2000. Clemson finished that season ranked fifth nationally in the final NSCAA poll.

Clowney scored 10 goals and recorded 18 assists during her career. The 18 assists in 77 career games ranks ninth in Clemson history. Clowney was named the team's Most Improved Player as a sophomore in 1999. She was named to the ACC Academic Honor Roll in 2001 and 2002. Clowney also received the ACC Top Six Award for her dedication to community service. Clowney was a member of the Region III South Team that won a gold medal in the 2001 Olympic Festival in Chicago, Ill. and was a member of the National "B" team player pool in 2001. She played professionally for the Charlotte Speed in 1999 and the Atlanta Classics in 2000 and 2001.

Clowney has served on the coaching staff for the state of South Carolina's Olympic Development Program team for the last three years and has also coached for the Carolina Elite Soccer Academy (CESA). She also has coached the 1994 South Carolina Olympic Development Program team and has worked with the Clemson-Anderson Soccer Alliance (CASA) program.

Hawkey recently completed his second season as an assistant coach with the Hurricanes, a period during which UM went a combined 17-16-6 over two seasons, including a mark of 9-7-5 in 2007 marking Miami's first winning season in six years. Miami's 4-4-2 record in Atlantic Coast Conference play in 2007 was the team's best ever in league action.

Before his stint at Miami, Hawkey served as an assistant coach for four seasons at Western Kentucky where he was primarily responsible for the goalkeepers, while also assisting in all aspects of the Lady Hilltopper women's program, including coaching, recruiting, conditioning and fundraising efforts. While at WKU, he also served as the Lady Topper Soccer Academy Camp Director.

A U.S. Soccer Federation "A" Licensed coach who earned his National Youth License in 2006-07, Hawkey also holds a NSCAA Advanced National Diploma and is certified as a NSCAA Goalkeeping Level II coach. He has served on the Region II staff, as well as on coaching staffs for both the Kentucky and Ohio South Youth Soccer Associations, working with the state Olympic Development Programs.

A 1999 graduate of Western Kentucky, Hawkey's collegiate coaching career began at his alma mater in 2000 as an assistant coach for the men's program for one season. As a player with the Hilltoppers from 1996-99, he was a two-time All-Missouri Valley Conference selection.

ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The NCAA and every college president has an interest in its highest-profile students doing well in the classroom. It is never a surprise when gymnastics or tennis or swimming has performers ranking in the classroom as well as in athletics competition.

The sports most watched by all-football and men's basketball-are also frequently the sports of most concern from an academics standpoint.

Alabama has had good news on both fronts.

The Crimson Tide football team turned in one of its best semesters academically in school history last fall. Returning players compiled a cumulative 2.56 grade-point average, which included a 2.64 grade-point average for the recently completed fall semester. Even more impressive was the freshman class, with a fall GPA of 3.098 and a cumulative overall GPA of 2.984.

"We just had the best academic semester we have ever had," said Coach Nick Saban. "I think a lot of the credit should go to our players and their efforts, in terms of what they did. Our academic support did a fantastic job. This is the highest GPA we have had with the varsity players and the highest GPA we have had with the freshman players. Our graduates are very high as well. We are pleased with this part of our program, we just have to continue to build and get the kind of performance on and off the field that we would like to have on a consistent basis so we can be champions sometime in the near future."

Seven student-athletes from the varsity posted a 3.0 grade-point average or higher and 60 percent of the team increased their

cumulative overall grade point average. Seventy-seven percent of the football team passed 12 or more semester hours this fall.

"Our student-athletes in the football program had an outstanding semester this fall and their dedication to academics should be applauded," Jon Dever, assistant athletics director for Student Services, said. "We've made steady improvement since Coach Saban arrived in January and the commitment to academics from the entire staff has made a significant impact in the focus and discipline among the players. This is one of the best fall semesters we have had in the 16 years I have been at The University of Alabama."

The Crimson Tide freshman class also posted some impressive academic numbers this fall, as they tried to balance a rigid schedule while being away from home for the first time.

"Academics are very important to me," Alabama redshirt freshman running back Terry Grant said. "There are not lot of guys from my hometown who had the chance to go to college. I know football is not always going to be there and you need a backup plan. The education will always be there and that's why it's important to work hard and make good grades."

The freshman class recorded a 3.098 grade point average for the fall semester. The freshmen passed 264 total hours this fall, with each of the 20 members of the class passing at least nine semester hours. Nine freshmen passed at least 15 hours last semester. Every member of the class had at least a 2.6 grade-point average and 14 of the 20 members of the class attained a 3.0 GPA or higher.

Meanwhile, Coach Mark Gottfried's Alabama men's basketball team had what is believed to be the best-ever team GPA the basketball program has had. The 15 players on the 2007-08 squad had a 3.12 team GPA on a 4.0 scale. Perfect in every class with all "A's" was sophomore starting forward Demetrius Jemison, a marketing major who says it was his first 4.0 since his junior year in high school at Birmingham's Huffman High School.

"Our guys have always done well but we this past semester they did an extremely good job," said Gottfried who was an Academic All-Southeastern Conference player during his playing career at Alabama. "They worked very hard academically. It's something we emphasize but you've got to give the credit to the young guys. They did a good job. That's one thing I like about this team. We've got guys who take care of business on the floor and they do it academically as well. That's been great to see."

Three student-athletes on the team had a GPA of 3.5 or higher, including Jemison, Senario Hillman and Justin Tubbs.

Greg Cage and John Dill, are preparing for law school. Dill graduated in December with a degree in history. Richard Hendrix is a communications major, the same degree his coach, Mark Gottfried, graduated with from Alabama in 1987. Brandon Hollinger is majoring in consumer affairs. Mykal Riley, who graduated in December, has a degree in human environmental sciences. Ron Steele is a financial planning major. Justin Tubbs and Justin Knox are business majors, to give but some examples of the variety.

Three Tide basketball players graduated in December and are taking classes in the spring semester toward second degrees, including Steele, Riley and Dill. Three more will graduate either in the spring or summer semester, including Hendrix and Cage who graduate within three years of enrolling, and Kyle Sellers.

DROUGHT OVER

The Alabama women's basketball team put together one of its finest defensive performances and combined that with its best shooting night on the season to avenge its worst loss in school history by running past South Carolina 65-54 on January 10, opening night of Southeastern Conference play.

The win ended a 19-game SEC losing streak that included losing every conference game in 2007.

With the Coleman Coliseum win, the Tide moved to .500 on the season with an 8-8 overall record and a 1-0 mark in SEC play. "How happy can you be for a basketball team who has been through so much adversity this season," Coach Stephany Smith

said. "I love how we persevered and the focus and the fight. There are not enough words to describe how happy I am for this basketball team."

Last season in Columbia, the Gamecocks handed the Tide its worst loss in school history with a 60-point defeat. Alabama did not forget as it turned in a defensive gem by holding South Carolina to 36 percent (20-for-55) shooting and a near season-low 54 points. The Gamecocks tallied only 21 points in the first half by shooting a paltry 30 percent (8-for-27).

On the offensive end, the Tide was lights out. Alabama shot a season-best 56 percent (24-for-43) from the floor and from beyond the arc (5-for-9).

LEGEND OF THE SUN BOWL

College Football Hall of Fame member and former Alabama All-America Cornelius Bennett has been named to the 2007 Legends of the Sun Bowl Team. Bennett was joined in the honor by former coaching legend Don James, who compiled a 178-76-3 (.698) record in 22 seasons as a collegiate head coach at Kent State and Washington, including two Sun Bowl appearances.

Bennett, a three-time All-America at Alabama, played in the 1983 Sun Bowl against SMU and the 1986 Sun Bowl against Washington. Against SMU, Bennett had a seven-tackle performance, as the Crimson Tide upset number six SMU, 28-7.

In 1986, Bennett led 12th-ranked Alabama to a 28-6 win over number 13 Washington. He had 11 tackles and one sack against the Huskies and was named the C.M. Hendricks Most Valuable Player. At the time, Bennett was just the third defensive player in the game's history to win the MVP award.

A native of Birmingham, Bennett was the 1986 Southeastern Conference Player of the Year, as well as the 1986 Lombardi Trophy winner. He also finished seventh in the Heisman Trophy balloting that season. In all, he finished the 1986 campaign with 61 tackles, 23 for a loss, with 15 sacks, six forced fumbles and three fumble recoveries.

Bennett had a storied career at Alabama, which included defensive MVP at the 1985 Aloha Bowl and three-time All-SEC selection. He recorded 287 tackles, 37 tackles for a loss and 20 sacks during his four-year stay at Alabama. He was named to the Tide's Team of the Century and was also named the Player of the Decade for the 1980s. Bennett was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 2005.

The seventh overall pick in the 1987 NFL Draft by the Indianapolis Colts, Bennett played 14 seasons in the NFL (1987-2000) and started in five Super Bowls, including four consecutive appearances with the Buffalo Bills (1990-1993).

Bennett had an outstanding NFL career, which included five Pro Bowl appearances (1989, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994) and two AFC Defensive Player of the Year awards in 1988 and 1991. He recorded 71.5 sacks, seven interceptions and 26 fumble recoveries during his NFL career. At the time of his retirement, Bennett's 26 fumble recoveries ranked third all-time in NFL history.

After playing with the Bills from 1987-95, Bennett spent the next three seasons with the Atlanta Falcons, where he helped lead the Falcons to the Super Bowl in 1998. He closed out his career with the Indianapolis, playing for two seasons with the Colts.

James brought Washington to El Paso in 1979 and 1986. In 1979, his Huskies stunned Texas, 14-7, at Sun Bowl Stadium. He returned to the Sun City in 1986, where Washington was knocked off by Alabama.

In 1971, James became head coach at Kent State University, where he compiled a 25-19 record over four years. While there, he coached NFL great Jack Lambert and current Alabama Coach Nick Saban.

In 1994, the Sun Bowl Association and the Rotary Club of El Paso commenced the Legends of the Sun Bowl team to honor individuals whose exemplary accomplishments have enhanced the bowl throughout its 74-year history. Legends are honored at the annual Rotary Sun Bowl Team Luncheon held the week of the game.

Bennett's former Alabama teammate, the late Derrick Thomas, was honored in 2000. ■

2007-08 ALABAMA WINTER SPORTS SCHEDULES

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Date	Opponent	CT
Nov. 9	Troy	7:00
Nov. 13	@ Mercer	6:30
Nov. 19	Belmont	7:00
Nov. 23	Southern Miss	7:00
Nov. 28	@ Texas A&M	8:00
Dec. 1	SE Louisiana	1:00
Dec. 5	Georgetown	6:00
	@ Birmingham	
Dec. 8	Nicholls State	Noon
	LAS VEGAS CLASSIC	
Dec. 17	Wofford	7:00
Dec. 19	Texas Pan-American	7:00
Dec. 22	Missouri State @ Las Vegas	7:00
Dec. 23	Purdue or Iowa State	9:30
	@ Las Vegas	
Dec. 29	George Washington	6:00
Jan. 1	Clemson	3:30
Jan. 4	Chicago State	7:00
Jan. 8	Florida	TBA
Jan. 13	@ Arkansas	TBA
Jan. 16	@ Georgia	TBA
Jan. 19	Mississippi State	TBA
Jan. 26	Auburn	TBA
Jan. 29	Tennessee	TBA
Feb. 2	LSU	TBA
Feb. 6	@ Mississippi State	TBA
Feb. 9	@ Kentucky	Noon
Feb. 13	Ole Miss	7:00
Feb. 16	@ South Carolina	6:00
Feb. 24	@ Auburn	TBA
Feb. 27	Arkansas	TBA
March 1	@ Ole Miss	TBA
March 5	@ LSU	TBA
March 8	Vanderbilt	6:00
March 13-	SEC Tournament	
March 18	@ Atlanta	

GYMNASTICS

Date	Opponent	CT
Jan. 11	Illinois	7:30
Jan. 18	@ Auburn	7:00
Jan. 25	@ Kentucky	6:00
Feb. 1	Georgia	7:30
Feb. 8	Arkansas	7:30
Feb. 22	@ LSU	7:00
Feb. 29	Florida	7:30
March 7	@ Stanford	TBA
March 9	@ UCLA	2:00
March 14	Penn State	7:30
March 21	Auburn	7:30
March 29	SEC Championships @ Duluth, Ga.	
April 12	NCAA Regionals TBA	
April 24-26	NCAA Championships @ Athens, Ga.	

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Date	Opponent	CT
Nov. 10	Tulane	TBA
Nov. 13	@ Samford	7:30
Nov. 18	Arkansas State	TBA
Nov. 23-	Junkanoo Jam @ Grand Bahamas	
Nov. 24	(Eastern Michigan, NC State, Washington State)	
Nov. 28	@ Belmont	7:00
Nov. 30	@ Tennessee Tech	7:00
Dec. 5	Louisiana Tech	TBA
Dec. 9	St. Mary's	TBA
Dec. 15	@ UT-Chattanooga	1:00
Dec. 17	Alabama A&M	TBA
Dec. 20	Hampton	TBA
Dec. 22	Jacksonville State	TBA
Jan. 2	East Tennessee	TBA
Jan. 5	SE Louisiana	TBA
Jan. 10	South Carolina	TBA
Jan. 13	@ Florida	1:00
Jan. 17	Arkansas	TBA
Jan. 20	@ Georgia	4:00
Jan. 27	Auburn	TBA
Jan. 31	@ Mississippi State	7:00
Feb. 3	@ Ole Miss	TBA
Feb. 7	LSU	TBA
Feb. 10	Vanderbilt	TBA
Feb. 14	@ Auburn	6:00
Feb. 17	@ Kentucky	Noon
Feb. 21	Tennessee	TBA
Feb. 24	Ole Miss	TBA
March 2	@ Vanderbilt	2:00
March 6-9	SEC Tournament @ Nashville	

SWIMMING & DIVING

Date	Opponent	CT
Oct. 13	Georgia Tech, Clemson, FSU @ Atlanta	Noon
Oct. 26-27	@ SMU Classic (W)	6:00
Nov. 2	LSU (M&W), Vanderbilt (W)	4:00
Nov. 10	Delta State, Centenary @ Athens, Miss.	2:00
Nov. 30-	Ohio Diving Invitational	All Day
Dec. 2	@ Columbus	
Nov. 30-	Alabama Classic	
Dec. 2	(Swimming only)	
Jan. 19	Kentucky	1:00
Jan. 26	South Carolina, Georgia @ Columbia	11:00
Feb. 20-23	SEC Championships @ Tuscaloosa	
March 1	Bulldog Invitational @ Athens	
March 8	Auburn Last Chance	
March 14-18	NCAA Zone Diving @ Auburn	
March 20-22	Women's NCAA @ Columbus, Ohio	
March 27-29	Men's NCAA @ Federal Way, Wash.	
	(All times tentative)	

2008 ALABAMA SPRING SPORTS SCHEDULES

BASEBALL

Date	Opponent	CT
Feb. 22	Cal-Poly	6:30
Feb. 23	Cal-Poly	4:00
Feb. 24	Cal-Poly	11:00
Feb. 28-March 1	FRISCO TOURNAMENT @ FRISCO, TEXAS (Teams TBA)	
March 2	@ UT-Arlington	1:00
March 4	Troy @ Montgomery	6:30
March 5	Troy	6:30
March 7	Youngstown State	6:30
March 8	Youngstown State	4:00
March 9	Youngstown State	2:00
March 11	@ North Alabama	6:00
March 12	Samford	6:30
March 14	@ Kentucky	3:00
March 15	@ Kentucky	1:00
March 16	@ Kentucky	Noon
March 18	New Orleans	6:30
March 19	New Orleans	6:30
March 21	Vanderbilt	6:30
March 22	Vanderbilt	4:00
March 23	Vanderbilt	2:00
March 25	Jacksonville State	6:30
March 26	@ Jacksonville State	6:30
March 28	Ole Miss	6:30
March 29	Ole Miss	4:00
March 30	Ole Miss	2:00
April 1	UAB	6:30
April 2	UAB @ Hoover	TBA
April 4	@ LSU	7:00
April 5	@ LSU	3:00
April 6	@ LSU	1:00
April 8	Mississippi Valley State	6:30
April 9	SE Louisiana	6:30
April 11	@ Tennessee	6:00
April 12	@ Tennessee	3:00
April 13	@ Tennessee	1:00
April 16	Southern Miss @ Pearl	7:00
April 18	Mississippi State	6:30
April 19	Mississippi State	4:00
April 20	Mississippi State	2:00
April 22	Lipscomb	6:30
April 23	@ South Alabama	TBA
April 25	Auburn	6:30
April 26	Auburn (FSN TV)	3:00
April 27	Auburn	2:00
April 29	@ Samford	6:00
May 2	@ Arkansas	6:35
May 3	@ Arkansas	2:05
May 4	@ Arkansas	1:05
May 9	Florida	6:30
May 10	Florida	4:00
May 11	Florida	2:00
May 15	@ Georgia	5:30
May 16	@ Georgia	5:30
May 17	@ Georgia	2:00
May 21-May 25	SEC Tournament @ Hoover	

MEN'S TENNIS

Date	Opponent	CT
Jan. 10	@ Hawaii	1:00
Jan. 17-21	SEC Indoors @ New Orleans	
Jan. 26	Troy	10:00
Jan. 26	Southern Miss	3:00
Feb. 3	Purman	10:00
Feb. 3	Georgia State	3:00
Feb. 8	@ Cal-Irvine	1:00
Feb. 9	@ Pepperdine	1:30
Feb. 15-18	ITA National Indoors @ Seattle	
Feb. 24	Indiana	1:00
Feb. 29	LSU	1:00
March 2	Arkansas	1:00
March 7	@ Mississippi State	2:00
March 9	@ Ole Miss	1:00
March 13-16	Blue-Gray @ Montgomery	
March 21	Kentucky	2:00
March 23	@ Vanderbilt	1:00
March 28	Georgia	3:00
March 30	Tennessee	1:00
April 4	@ South Carolina	2:00
April 6	@ Florida	1:00
April 9	UAB @ Samford	Noon
April 9	@ Samford	5:30
April 12	Auburn	5:00
April 18-20	SEC Championships @ Sea Island, Ga.	
May 15-26	NCAA Championships @ Tulsa, Okla.	

WOMEN'S TENNIS

Date	Opponent	CT
Jan. 15-20	HAWAII CLASSIC	
Jan. 27	Southern Miss	1:00
Jan. 27	Samford	TBA
Feb. 2	@ UNC-Charlotte	1:00
Feb. 3	@ Furman	Noon
Feb. 9	Louisville	1:00
Feb. 10	Rice	Noon
Feb. 16	@ Iowa	Noon
Feb. 23	@ Oklahoma	TBA
Feb. 29	@ LSU	3:00
March 2	@ Arkansas	Noon
March 7	Mississippi State	3:00
March 9	Ole Miss	1:00
March 15	Houston	Noon
March 21	@ Kentucky	1:00
March 23	Vanderbilt	1:00
March 26	@ Georgia	4:00
March 30	@ Tennessee	1:00
April 4	South Carolina	4:00
April 6	Florida	1:00
April 12	@ Auburn	TBA
April 18-20	SEC Championships @ Knoxville, Tenn.	
May 15-26	NCAA Championships @ Tulsa, Okla.	

SOFTBALL

Date	Opponent	CT
Feb. 8-10	HAMPTON INN BAMA BASH (Purdue, Jacksonville State, South Alabama)	TBA
Feb. 13	McNeese State	5:00
Feb. 14	Georgia Tech	7:00
Feb. 15-17	HAMPTON INN CRIMSON CLASSIC (Georgia Tech, Middle Tennessee, New Mexico)	TBA
Feb. 22-24	FUN IN THE SUN TOURNAMENT @ Miami (Connecticut, Florida International, Illinois)	TBA
Feb. 29-March 1	WASHINGTON CLASSIC @ Seattle (Washington, Idaho State, Portland State, Nevada)	TBA
March 6	@ UAB	6:30
March 8	Tennessee (2)	1:00
March 9	Tennessee	1:30
March 12	Florida (2)	5:00
March 15	@ Mississippi State (2)	1:00
March 16	@ Mississippi State	1:00
March 19	U-T CHATTANOOGA ROUND ROBIN Kent State	2:00
March 19	U-T Chattanooga	6:00
March 21	@ Kentucky	6:00
March 22	@ Kentucky (2)	1:00
March 25	UAB	6:30
March 29	Ole Miss (2)	1:00
March 30	Ole Miss	1:30
April 2	@ Samford	6:30
April 5	LSU (2)	1:00
April 6	LSU	1:30
April 10	@ Troy	6:30
April 12	@ Auburn (2)	1:00
April 13	@ Auburn	1:00
April 15	USA Olympic Team @ Birmingham Liberty Park	TBA
April 17	@ Arkansas (2)	5:00
April 19	South Carolina (2)	1:00
April 20	South Carolina	1:30
April 23	Samford	6:30
April 29	DEPAUL ROUND ROBIN @ Chicago DePaul	1:00
April 29	Northwestern	3:00
May 3	@ Georgia (2)	1:00
May 4	@ Georgia	1:00
May 8-10	SEC Tournament @ Baton Rouge	

MEN'S GOLF

Date	Event
Feb. 17-19	John Hayt Intercollegiate @ Jacksonville, Fla.
Feb. 29-March 2	Puerto Rico Classic @ Rio Mar Beach
March 14-16	EZ-Go-Schenkel @ Statesboro, Ga.
March 24-26	US Collegiate @ Atlanta
April 7-8	Morris Williams @ Austin, Texas
April 18-20	SEC Championships @ Sea Island, Ga.
May 17-19	NCAA East @ Chattanooga
May 30-June 2	NCAA Championships @ West Lafayette, Ind.

WOMEN'S GOLF

Date	Event
Feb. 24-26	Lady Puerto Rico Classic @ Rio Grande
March 9-11	Central Florida Invitational @ Orlando
March 14-16	LSU/Cleveland Classic @ Baton Rouge
March 21-23	Liz Murphey @ Athens, Ga.
April 4-6	Crimson Tide Classic @ Ol' Colony
April 18-20	SEC Championships at Loudon, Tenn.
May 20-23	NCAA Championships @ Albuquerque, N.M.

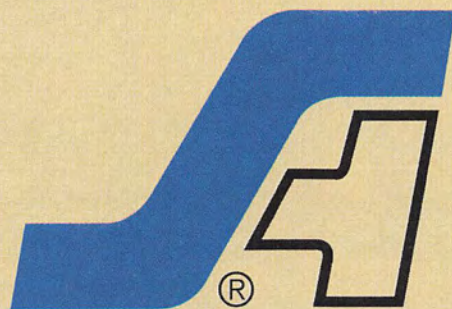
MEN'S TRACK

Date	Event
Jan. 18	@ Notre Dame Invitational
Jan. 26	@ Boise State
Feb. 1-2	@ Kentucky
Feb. 8-9	@ Notre Dame
Feb. 16	@ Washington
Feb. 29-March 2	SEC @ Fayetteville, Ark.
March 7-8	Last Chance @ Notre Dame
March 14-15	NCAA @ Fayetteville, Ark.
(Outdoor)	
March 27-30	Alabama Relays
April 4-5	@ Stanford
April 5	@ Auburn
April 12	@ Arizona State
April 24-26	Drake Relays @ Des Moines, Iowa
May 2-3	@ Ole Miss
May 15-18	SEC @ Auburn
June 11-14	NCAA @ Des Moines, Iowa

WOMEN'S TRACK

Date	Event
(Indoor)	
Jan. 11-12	@ Kentucky
Jan. 18-19	@ Clemson
Feb. 8-9	Adidas @ Nebraska
Feb. 15-16	Iowa State Invitational
Feb. 29-March 2	SEC @ Fayetteville
March 7-8	Last Chance @ Notre Dame
March 14-15	NCAA @ Fayetteville
(Outdoor)	
March 27-30	Alabama Relays
April 4-5	@ Stanford
April 9-12	Sea-Ray Relays @ Knoxville
April 18-19	Vanderbilt Invitational
April 24-26	Drake Relays @ Des Moines, Iowa
May 3	@ Ole Miss
May 15-18	SEC @ Auburn
June 11-14	NCAA @ Des Moines, Iowa

(All times tentative)



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